

AFRICANA WOMANISM SYLLABUS

English 4420/Black Studies—Contemporary Africana Womanist Writers

Class: Tuesdays/Thursdays, 11:00-12:15 or 2:00-3:15

Instructor: Dr. Clenora Hudson-Weems, Professor of English

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Course Description, Rationale, Goals and Objectives:

English 4420, Africana Womanism, is an undergraduate and graduate course specifically designed to broaden one's scope from a family-centered perspective in the area of issues, recurring themes and/or trends in modern Africana women fiction, highlighting its applicability to our everyday lives worldwide. An in depth study of the lives and selected works by five (5) leading Africana women writers—Noted Pre-Africana Womanist, Zora Neale Hurston (*Their Eyes Were Watching God*); African American/Caribbean Novelist, Paule Marshall (*Praisesong for the Widow*); Nobel Prize Winning author, Toni Morrison (*Beloved*); Popular Cultural Novelist, Terry McMillan (*Disappearing Acts*); and Former Rap Star Artist, Sister Souljah (*No Disrespect*)--will be enhanced by critical readings of two (2) books from the Africana Womanism Trilogy—*Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* and *Africana Womanist Literary Theory*--as well as scholarly articles by and about the various authors. Methodologically, we will be highlighting the prioritization of Race, Class & Gender, a key feature in this powerful paradigm, committed to the empowerment and equality of all, rather than a gender exclusive agenda (female-centered, female-empowerment) so characteristic of other female based constructs. Students will be introduced to an authentic theoretical concept and methodology, Africana Womanism, and will be applying Africana Womanist theory to the five Africana womanist novels, which clearly reflect our daily lives throughout the world.

Meshed together, the primary and secondary reading materials, as well as other media materials, will aid students in refining their own individual concepts about not only the writings of the individual authors, but about critical current issues, particularly as they relate to Africana women and their families and communities. The ultimate objective of the course, then, is to enhance one's knowledge and appreciation of Africana women and their interconnection with their families (men and children) in particular and Africana life and culture (historically and currently) in general.

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to yet another theoretical construct, in addition to the widely known female-based theory—Feminism,” which is referenced in the Africana Womanism books. Africana Womanism is an authentic paradigm designed specifically for all women of African descent, and by extension for all men and women in general. It demonstrates that we are all—men, women and children--In It Together!

Textbooks and Course Materials:

Primary Sources (Required)

Hudson-Weems, Clenora--*Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* (Bedford Publishers, 1993; Africa World Press, 2016)—TRANSLATED INTO GREEK

--*Africana Womanist Literary Theory* (Africa World Press, 2004)—TRANSLATED INTO PORTUGUESE

Hurston, Zora Neale--*Their Eyes Were Watching God* (University of Illinois Press)

Marshall, Paule—*Parisesong for the Widow* (Dutton)

McMillan, Terry--*Disappearing Acts* (Knopf)

Morrison, Toni --*Beloved* (Alfred A. Knopf)

Souljah, Sister--*No Disrespect* (Vintage Books)

Secondary Sources (Selections from these Pieces are required)

Bonetti, Kay--*The American Audio Prose Library*--Interviews with Toni Morrison, and Clenora Hudson-Weems

Hill, Patricia Liggins--General editor, *Call & Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American literary Tradition* (Houghton Mifflin, 1998)

Samuels, Wilfred D. and Clenora Hudson-Weems--*Toni Morrison* (Prentice-Hall, 1990)

Wikipedia—On Africana Womanism

Web Page Materials—Articles on Africana Womanism

***You Tube*, on Africana Womanism (Bowdoin College, 2015) & *Voices Unheard: A Conversation within Feminism & Womanism* (U of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, 2015)**

Videos—*Africana Womanism* (Southern Utah U, 2000s); *Africana Womanism versus Black Feminism* with Barbara Christian (Lincoln U, 1995); *The Issue Is* (St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, 1990s)

Media Coverage (Newspaper, TV, etc.) on Africana Womanism

Grade Determination

3 or more unexcused absences will result in lowering class grade a minimum of 1 grade level.*

--Class Participation 10 %

--Oral Report 10 %

--Pop Quizzes 15 %

--Mid-Term 30 %

--Final Research Paper/Annotated Bibliography (7-10 pages): 35 %

If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need to make arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please let me know as soon as possible.

Schedule

Weeks 1-15:

1. **Course Overview Course Requirements, the Research Paper/Annotated Bibliography--Documentation, etc.**

**Wikipedia and Web Page Materials/Articles on Africana Womanism--
Africana Womanism & the Critical Need for Africana Theory & Thought**

2. *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*-- Preliminaries; Chapter I, pp. 17-32; Chapter II, pp. 33-42

--Southern Utah U. Conversation Address on Africana Womanism

3. *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*--Chapter III, pp. 43-53; Chapter IV, pp. 55-74; Conclusion, pp. 145-144; Afterthought, pp. 145-6

--*Africana Womanism on You Tube*, Bowdoin College, 2015

4. *Africana Womanist Literary Theory*—Preliminaries; Chapter I, pp. 1-21; Chapter III, pp. 33-50

Bonetti, Kay--*American Audio Prose Library*—Interview--Hudson-Weems

5. *Africana Womanist Literary Theory*--Chapter IV, pp. 51-63; Chapter V, pp. 65-77

Africana Womanist Literary Theory--Chapter VI, pp. 79-97; Conclusion; Afterword

Call & Response (C & R)--Women's Voices of Self-Definitions, pp. 1376-1381

6. **Video-Television Interview with Dr. Barbara Christian and Dr. Clenora Hudson-Weems on Black Feminism versus Africana Womanism (1995)**

Oral Reports:

Hudson-Weems—“Africana Womanism: An Historical, Global Perspective for Women of African Descent,” p. 1812

Barbara Smith—“Toward a Black Feminist Criticism,” p. 1816

bell hooks—“Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory,” p. 1844

7. —*The Issue Is*--Video on Africana Womanism

Zora Neale Hurston (*Call and Response*-pp. 942-946)

Quiz on Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

8. “Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*: Seeking Wholeness” in *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*, pp. 81-91

Oral Reports

9. Paula Marshall in *Call and Response*

Quiz on Marshall’s *Praisesong for the Widow*

Oral Reports

Marshall’s *Praisesong for the Widow*: Authentic Existence in *Africana Womanism*, pp. 105-117

10. --Mid-Term Exam

Library Class on Internet Source Documentation—Dr. Paula Roper

11. Toni Morrison

From Samuels & Hudson-Weems in *Toni Morrison*, pp. 1-30; pp. 94-138

Quiz—Morrison’s *Beloved*

Oral Reports

12. **Morrison’s *Beloved*: All Parts Equal in *Africana Womanist Literary Theory*, pp. 115-126**

Africana Womanist Literary Theory. Movie Review, Chapter IX, 127-130

Oral Reports

13. **Terry McMillan (*Call and Response*, pp. 1852-1855)**

Quiz on *Disappearing Acts*

“McMillan’s *Disappearing Acts*: In it Together,” *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*, pp. 133-142

Oral Reports

14. **Sister Souljah**

Quiz on Sister Souljah’s *No Disrespect*

“Sister Souljah’s *No Disrespect*: The Africana Womanist Dilemma” in *Africana Womanist Literary Theory*, pp. 99-113

15. **Oral Reports**

Other Africana Womanist Scholars

–*War Room*, the movie

Wrap Up

--Research Paper or Annotated Bibliography Due



Africana Womanism: "I Got Your Back, Boo"

**Don't you know by now, girl, we're all In It Together?
Family-Centrality--that's it; we're going nowhere without
the other.**

**That means the men, the women, and children, too,
Truly collectively working—"I got your back, Boo."**

***Racism* means the violation of our constitutional rights,
Which creates on-going legal and even physical fights;
This 1st priority for humankind is doing what it must do,
Echoing our 1st lady, Michelle—"I got your back, Boo."**

***Classism* is the hoarding of financial privileges,
Privileges we must all have now in pursuit of happiness.
Without a piece of the financial pie, we're doomed to have
a coup,
Remember--protect the other—"I got your back, Boo."**

***Sexism*, the final abominable sin of female subjugation,
A battle we must wage to restore our family relations.
All forms of sin inevitably fall under 1 of the 3 offenses.
Africana Womanism—"I got your back, Boo"—corrects
our common senses.**

***By Clenora Hudson-Weems, PhD
Conceptualizer of African Womanism***