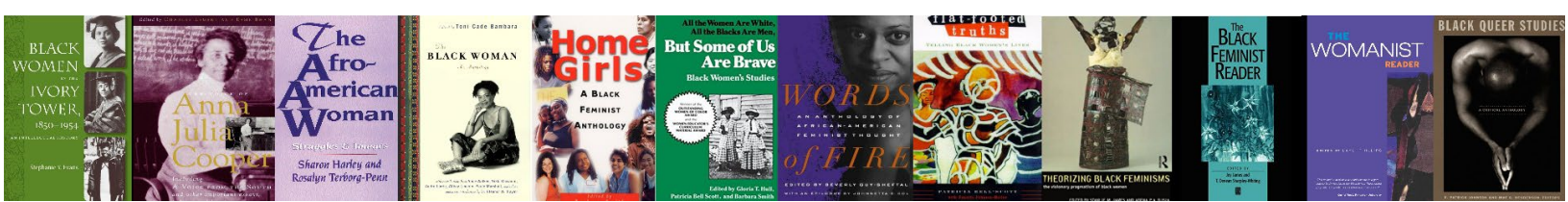


Foundations of Black Women's Studies

Essential Readings, 1850-2000

BWST 101 Syllabus Template¹



“This is not a small voice you hear.”

~Sonia Sanchez

[NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS]

Dr. Stephanie Y. Evans, Professor and Director of the Institute for Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Georgia State University, created this course to share content that expands institutionalization of Black women's studies in higher education. This “Foundations” class expands introductory curriculum by incorporating pre-1970s history and archival sources with establishment of the field in the 1980s as groundwork for more recent critical innovations. **Permission granted to download and use this template for course creation. Content may not be published without permission.** This “major works” course can be offered at the BA, MA, or PhD level, as one 16-week semester, two 8-week quarters, or split (Part I & Part II) into a 16-week course to reduce reading for undergraduate students. Tweak as needed. Enjoy!

Updated 21 September, 2022

COURSE INSTRUCTOR, INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION

Instructor Name, Contact, Location, & Office Hours

Department, Course Name, Course Number, Prerequisites, & Modality

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND RATIONALE

Framed by two eras (1850-1982 and 1982-2000), this class in intellectual history traces academic origins of race and gender studies back to 1850, when abolitionist Lucy Stanton at Oberlin College earned what is recognized as the first four-year degree granted to a Black woman. Stanton's commencement speech titled, “A Plea for the Oppressed,” is archived as a forerunner to other social justice education primary sources available at institutions like Howard University, Spelman College, Princeton University, Emory University, and University of Massachusetts-Amherst. This inclusive survey course connects scholar-activists from Anna Julia Cooper, Mary McLeod Bethune, Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander, and Pauli Murray to Toni Cade Bambara, Barbara Smith, Angela Davis, Patricia Hill Collins, and Kimberlé Crenshaw in ways that center the process of scholarly community building and creative resistance.

This foundational readings class contextualizes the 1970s growth in race & gender college course development and also complements the "Introduction to Black Women's Studies" and "Black Feminist Thought" courses to explore foci like transgender and nonbinary studies, Afropessimism, Black socialism & communism, Diaspora, Afrofuturism and other essential developments alluded to but not fully covered in initial publications. Essentially, this collection shows how the field developed in universities and illuminates the gaps which new scholarship must fill.

¹ Course template created by [Dr. Stephanie Y. Evans](#). Details and additional resources online at foundationsofblackwomensstudies.net.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Students will sign up for reading groups. Most selections available in electronic form via university libraries (See texts below).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this course is to trace the establishment of Black Women's Studies (BWST) as an academic interdisciplinary. Black Women's Studies is a collaborative feminist-womanist intersectional area of study developed both within and beyond the academy. This course establishes a "long history" of development of the field by introducing the many figures who contributed to the institutional development over time. Dr. Anna Julia Cooper wrote about "regeneration," the look backward, inward, and forward; Black Women's Studies is a regenerative field and, with this foundation, students can more clearly measure evolution of ideas, practices, and actively contribute to defining and redefining this critical discipline.

Marking both the 50th Anniversary of the discipline and the 150th Anniversary of Black women's degree attainment, this syllabus reflects multiple scholarly perspectives. Though not absolute in range (largely U.S., English, 20th-century based), readings expand extant curricular offerings and present broad and diverse theoretical approaches, identities, disciplinary training, activisms, and geographic locations. Along with comprehensive content, this foundation course emphasizes accessing various source types.² Sources include survey texts, archives, essays, life writing, poetry, and journal articles but mainly highlights edited books. BWST developed as a series of conversations that have grounded collegiate study of race, class, gender, sexuality, and freedom. This course provides must-read standards while also enabling flexibility for students to emphasize specific topics in order to use these cornerstones as a springboard from which to develop their own work.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES³

Knowledge

Comprehension

Analysis

Application

Synthesis

Evaluation

*Outcomes should reflect regenerative praxis (what Anna Julia Cooper defined as looking backward, inward, and forward), and explore themes that emerge from the scholarship of Black women:

EMERGENT THEMES (EXAMPLES)

1. Human Rights & Social Justice (ex. Lucy Stanton & Anna Julia Cooper)
2. Culture & Creativity (ex. bell hooks & Katherine Dunham)
3. Politics & Power (ex. Florynce Kennedy & Toni Cade Bambara)
4. Health & Wellness (ex. Evelyn White & Akasha Gloria Hull)

"This is what I mean when I say Africana women's mindfulness is regenerative: it connects time and place to a community, before and after our own present moment, era, and locale."

~Stephanie Y. Evans.

Black Women's Yoga History: Memoirs of Inner Peace (2021, p. 35).

² For final papers, ten different source types are required. See REAL BAD NEWS Research and Teaching Resource <http://www.professorevans.net/teaching.html>.

³ SLO Resource: <https://www.bu.edu/provost/files/2017/06/Creating-Learning-Outcomes-Stanford.pdf>. Define according to individual, departmental, college, and campus missions/strategic plans.

COURSE SCHEDULE & REQUIRED READING [Students assigned or select reading groups.]

PART I: 1850-1983

Week 1

ARCHIVES (choose one)
Lucy Stanton, [Oberlin College](#)
Anna Julia Cooper, [Howard University](#)
Florynce Kennedy, [Harvard University](#)
Toni Cade Bambara, [Spelman College](#)

Week 2

SURVEY TEXT
Black Women in the Ivory Tower, 1850-1954, An Intellectual History
Stephanie Y. Evans (2007)

Week 3

ESSAYS
A Voice from the South, By a Black Woman of the South, in *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper* (1892)

Week 4

COLLECTIONS
The Afro-American Woman: Struggles & Images
Sharon Harley & Rosalyn Terborg-Penn (1978)

Week 5

The Black Woman
Toni Cade Bambara (1970)

Week 6

Homegirls: A Black Feminist Anthology (1983)
Barbara Smith

Week 7

All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave
Akasha Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, Barbara Smith (1982)

Week 8

Review and Preview: Defining a Personal Research Agenda
Case Study: bell hooks



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[“Black Women Writers at the Inauguration of Sister President Johnnetta B. Cole”](#)

Top Row: Louise Meriwether, Pinkie Gordon Lane, Johnnetta Cole and Paula Giddings. Middle Row: Pearl Cleage, Gwendolyn Brooks and Toni Cade Bambara. Bottom Row: Sonia Sanchez, Nikki Giovanni and Mari Evans. Photo credit: Susan J. Ross. ©1988. Also, “SisterLove” [Jim Alexander](#)

PART II: 1983-2000

Week 9

ARCHIVES (choose one)

Maya Angelou, [Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture](#)

Toni Morrison, [Princeton University](#)

Alice Walker, [Emory University](#)

Irma McClaurin, Black Feminist Archive, [University of Massachusetts-Amherst](#)

WEEK 10

SURVEY TEXT

Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought,
Beverly Guy-Sheftall (1995)

Week 11

ESSAYS

Flat-Footed Truths: Telling Black Women's Lives

Patricia Bell Scott & Juanita Johnson-Bailey (1998)

Week 12

COLLECTIONS

Theorizing Black Feminisms

Stanlie M. James & Abena P. A. Busia (1993)

Week 13

The Black Feminist Reader

Joy James & Tracy Sharpley-Whiting (2000)

Week 14

The Womanist Reader

Layli Phillips [Maparyan] (2006)

Week 15

Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology (2005)

E. Patrick Johnson & Mae G. Henderson

Week 16

Presentations

[NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS]

Discussion facilitation groups can be assigned or students can sign up for reading groups. Vary number of readings and assignment length/depth with undergraduate and graduate students. Short papers feed into the final paper. Topics should be based on student interest.

GRADES & ATTENDANCE POLICY

GRADE CRITERIA [SAMPLE]

Content: solid thesis statement, argument, and evidence

Structure: correct language use, edited

Sources: cited sources with footnotes/endnotes or bibliography

[SAMPLE]:

A+ 98 – 100

B+ 87 – 89

C+ 77 – 79

D 60-69

A 93 – 97

B 83 – 86

C 73 – 76

F 59 or below

A- 90 – 92

B- 80 – 82

C- 70-72

ASSIGNMENTS

EXAMPLES:

- Discussion Leader, Critical Response Papers, Final Paper, Community Engagement or Creative Project

RECOMMENDED READING

To access the bibliography of over 1,400 books in Black Women's Studies, visit [BWST Booklist](#).

SAMPLE EDITED BOOKS / ANTHOLOGIES

- Barbara Smith, Demita Frazier, and Beverly Smith. *The Combahee River Collective* (1977)
- La Frances Rogers-Rose. *The Black Woman* (1980)
- Mari Evans. *Black Women Writers, 1950-1980* (1984)
- Shelby Lewis & Eleanor Hinton Hoytt. [The Africana Women's Studies Series, 1-4](#) (1985)
- Margaret Busby. *Daughters of Africa: An International Anthology of Writing by Women of African Descent* (1992)
- Evelyn White. *The Black Women's Health Book* (1993)
- Lois Benjamin. *Black Women in the Academy: Promises and Perils* (1997)
- Mary Modupe Kolawole. *Womanism and African Consciousness* (1997)
- Toni Cade Bambara. *Soul Talk: The New Spirituality of African American Women* (2001)
- Irma McClaurin. *Black Feminist Anthropology: Theory, Politics, Practice & Poetics* (2001)
- Rudolph P. Byrd and Beverly Guy-Sheftall. *Traps: African American Men on Gender and Sexuality Studies* (2001)
- Patricia Mohammed. *Gendered Realities: Essays in Caribbean Feminist Thought* (2002)
- Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí. *African Women & Feminism: Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood* (2003)
- Miriam DeCosta-Willis. *Daughters of the Diaspora: Afro-Hispanic Writers*. (2003)
- Stanlie M. James, Frances Smith Foster, Beverly Guy-Sheftall. *Still Brave: The Evolution of Black Women's Studies* (2009)
- Trimiko Melancon & Joanne Braxton. *Black Female Sexualities* (2015)
- Mia Bay, Farah J. Griffin, Martha S. Jones, Barbara D. Savage. *Toward an Intellectual History of Black Women* (2015)
- Brittney Cooper, Susana Morris, Robin and Boylorn. *Crunk Feminist Collective* (2017)
- Stephanie Y. Evans. *Black Women & Social Justice Education* (2019)
- Julie Shyne. *Persistence is Resistance: Celebrating 50 Years of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies* (2020)

SAMPLE REFERENCE ARTICLES

- Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American grammar Book." [Diacritics](#). (1987)
- Beverly Guy-Sheftall, "Black Women's Studies: The Interface of Women's Studies and Black Studies." [Phylon](#). (1992)
- Elaine Hedges and Dorothy O. Helly, "Looking Back, Moving Forward: 25 Years of Women's Studies History." [Women's Studies Quarterly](#). (1997)
- "Whatcha Gonna Do?": Revisiting "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book": A Conversation with Hortense Spillers, Saidiya Hartman, Farah Jasmine Griffin, Shelly Eversley, & Jennifer L. Morgan. [Women's Studies Quarterly](#). (2007)
- Elizabeth R. Cole and Nisha Z. Haniff, "Building a Home for Black Women's Studies. [Black Women, Gender + Families](#). (2007).
- Rose Brewer, "Black Women's Studies: Theory to Transformative Practice." [Socialism and Democracy](#). (2011)
- Shelby Lewis, "Career Path Essay." [Journal of Black Political Science](#). (2015)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For videos, additional syllabi, professional organizations, and videos, visit [Foundations of Black Women's Studies Website](#)

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

National Women's Studies Association <https://www.nwsa.org/>

Association for the Study of African American Life and History <https://asalh.org/>

Black Women's Studies Association <https://www.blackwomensstudies.com/>

ENCYCLOPEDIA

Darlene Clark Hine, et al. Black Women in America. [Oxford Reference](#). 2005.

CLASS AND CAMPUS POLICIES