

**The Sexual Politics of Hip Hop**  
**AFA 3930/ANT 3930 – Spring 2014**

(Adapted from course originally designed by Dr. Marilyn M. Thomas-Houston)

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**Office: Pugh 241 (Hours by appointment)**

**Tuesday 5-6, Thursday 6**  
**Turlington 2349**

“When we talk about the commodification of blackness, we aren’t just talking about how white people consume these images, but how black people and other people of color consume them, and how these become ways of knowing ourselves.”

-bell hooks

For more than 30 years, Hip Hop has been one of the most significant cultural identifiers for youth in the United States. Through a close examination of critical feminist and queer theory, this course explores the cultural and political implications of hip hop music and culture – specifically its impact on Black sexual politics and gender performance. Also important to this course is an exploration of the ways that Hip Hop projects images of the black body across national and global scales. The task of this course is to foster a critical discussion about the implications of these images, in addition to analyzing how these projections of the black *imago* are interpreted and refracted globally. Important queries that will reverberate throughout the semester include:

- Is it possible to be a Hip Hop feminist?
- What is different when women make the music?
- How has Hip Hop influenced and (re)shaped the ways that Black bodies are cast, on both national and global scales?
- Can Hip Hop be utilized as a feminist political tool?
- How does Hip Hop create spaces that disturb the boundaries of racialized sexuality and gender?
- Is Hip Hop queer?
- What are the key tensions and vibrant intersections between Hip Hop music and queerness?
- What are the structural and societal implications for the commodification and consumption of the Black body?

**Obscene and Offensive Material:** In this course, you will be required to listen to, view, and analyze offensive materials, including language and imagery that is obscene, sexist, homophobic, or racist, and descriptions of sexual conduct and violence. The instructor, the African American Studies Program, the Anthropology Department, nor the university share in the opinions of the artists who created these works. However, it is important to understand that these materials elucidate issues, debates, and controversies that are essential to this course; therefore, no suitable substitutions are available, and none will be provided.

By continuing with this course, you are agreeing to be held academically accountable for all required materials in the syllabus, regardless of their offensive nature. Students who are unwilling either to hear or think critically about such materials are advised not to continue with the course.

### **Required Texts**

Cohen, Cathy J.

2010 Democracy Remixed: Black Youth and the Future of American Politics. New York: Oxford University Press.

Morgan, Joan

1999 When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip-Hop Feminist Breaks it Down. New York: Touchstone.

Pough, Gwendolyn, Elaine Richardson, Aisha Durham, and Rachel Raimist, eds.

2007 Home Girls Make Some Noise: Hip Hop Feminism Anthology. Mira Loma, California: Parker Publishing, LLC.

Rose, Tricia.

2008 The Hip-Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Rap - and Why it Matters. New York: Basic Books.

### **Suggested Texts**

Chang, Jeff

2005 Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation. New York: Picador.

**Attendance:** Attendance will be taken in each class each day. Students are expected to come to class having read carefully the reading assignments for that session. They should be prepared to contribute to class discussions by raising questions and comments related to the topic for that class. Students are allowed (2) unexcused absences for the semester, every successive absence will negatively impact their final grade (1/2 letter grade for each subsequent absence.) Absences for religious holidays, illness, and official university business are excused, but proper notification must be provided (in advance if possible.)

**Evaluations:** Final course grades will be calculated through a combination of:

- **Attendance and Class participation (20%):** Students are expected to come to class having carefully read the reading assignments for that session. They should be prepared to contribute to class discussions by raising questions and comments related to the topic for that class.
- **Discussion Posts (40%):** In order to ensure an active and engaged class, this course requires students to read the materials outlined in the syllabus. Therefore, all students are responsible for submitting a weekly response to the readings by 11:59PM **each Wednesday**, in the online discussion forum. Each entry should not be between 400 and 500 words, and express a meaningful, critical

summary/commentary on those readings. **Students are required to submit 10 posts over the course of the semester. Late posts will not be given credit.**

- **Panel Discussion (20%):** Every Tuesday, a student panel will present comments and/or questions and lead discussion of the readings in class for at least an hour. This assignment is intended to bring in whatever insights students wish to contribute, based on the readings, class discussions, online discussion forum, and their own experiences and observations. Students can include videos, news articles, and additional materials. Panel member(s) will evaluate a significant portion of your grade.
- **Take Home Final Exam (20%):** The final exam will be distributed at the end of the semester as a take-home exam in essay format. Students will be given a list of questions, of which they choose three (3) to answer. Each answer should be at least three (3) double-spaced pages in length. Students will have one week to complete the exam and are expected to use class notes, course discussions and outside sources.

| Course Grading Scale (by %): |                 |                   |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| <b>A 93-100</b>              | <b>A- 90-92</b> | <b>B+ 87-89</b>   |
| <b>B 84-86</b>               | <b>B- 80-83</b> | <b>C+ 77-79</b>   |
| <b>C 74-76</b>               | <b>C- 70-73</b> | <b>D+ 67-69</b>   |
| <b>D 64-66</b>               | <b>D- 60-63</b> | <b>F 59-below</b> |

**Additional Course Information:**

**Academic Honesty:** Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. As a registered student in this course and at the University of Florida, you have agreed to the following statement:

*“I understand that the University of Florida expects its students to be honest in all their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University.”*

If you are caught plagiarizing, you will receive a zero on the assignment and will be referred to University administration for disciplinary action. If you have any doubt with citing correctly, please ask the instructor for guidance. You can also refer to the University’s Honor Code for more information regarding university policies at: <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html>. **Please don’t plagiarize.**

**Student Conduct:** All students must comply with the Student Conduct Code, which can found at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentconductcode.php>. Behavior that interferes with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to benefit from the instructional program will not be tolerated. Please silence/vibrate cell phones and all other electronic devices before

class. Laptops may only be used to take notes (i.e. please wait until the end of class to check your Facebook and Twitter).

**Disability Accommodations:** Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. The Disability Resource office is located in 001 Reid Hall. Further information can be found at [www.dso.ufl.edu/drp](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drp).

**University of Florida Counseling Services:** Resources are available on campus for students having personal or goal oriented problems:

- University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392---1575
- Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 391---1171 (personal counseling)
- Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392---1161
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392---1601

**\*\*Please note:** I may make adjustments to class readings or assignments over the course of the semester. If any modifications are made, I will let you know ahead of time.

### Course Reading and Assigned Readings Schedule

#### Week 1: Introduction

- 1/7 Introduction to the course  
Syllabus and Class Expectations
- 1/9 Aldridge, Derrick P. & James B. Stewart  
2005 Introduction: Hip Hop in History: Past, Present, and Future. *The Journal of African American History* 90(3): 190-195.

#### Week 2: Gender, Performance, and Black Youth Politics

- 1/14 Butler, Judith  
1990 *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge: New York. (Chapter 1)  
hooks, bell  
2009 *Black Women Shaping Feminist Theory* *In Still Brave: The Evolution of Black Women's Studies*, eds. Frances S. Foster, Beverly Guy-Sheftall and Stanlie M. James. New York: CUNY.
- 1/15 **\*\*Trouble the Water discussion panel – 2:30PM, and film screening in Pugh Hall, 6PM. Extra credit for going to both events!**
- 1/16 Cohen's *Democracy Remixed*, chapters 1-3

**Week 3: When Women make the Music**

- 1/21 Home Girls Make Some Noise: Hip Hop Feminism Anthology, Section 1
- 1/23 Mullins, Katie L.  
2012 Black Female Identity and Challenges to Masculine Discourse in Rah Digga's Dirty Harriet. *Popular Music and Society*, 1-19.  
Oware, Matthew  
2009 A 'Man's Woman'?: Contradictory Messages in the Songs of Female Rappers, 1992-2000. *Journal of Black Studies* 39(5): 786-802.

**Week 4: Masculinities**

- 2/4 Brown, Joshua R.  
2011 No Homo. *Journal of Homosexuality* 58(3): 299-314.  
Collins, Patricia Hill  
2004 *Booty Call: Sex, Violence, and Images of Black Masculinity In Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*. New York: Routledge.  
Geertz, Clifford  
1973 *Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight In The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- 2/6 Penney, Joel  
2012 "We Don't Wear Tight Clothes": Gay Panic and Queer Style in Contemporary Hip Hop. *Popular Music and Society* 35(3): 321-332.  
Gray, Herman  
1995 Black Masculinity and Visual Culture. *Callaloo* 18(2): 401-405.

**Week 5: Race and Representation - The Hip Hop Wars**

- 2/11 Rose's *The Hip-Hop Wars*, chapters 3-6
- 2/13 Rose's *The Hip-Hop Wars*, chapters 7-8

**Week 6: Hip Hop Feminism?**

- 2/18 Durham, Aisha, Brittney Cooper, and Susana M. Morris  
2013 *The Stage Hip-Hop Feminism Built: A New Directions Essay*. *Signs* 38(3): 721-737.  
Chapter 1 & 2 of Morgan's *When Chickenheads Come to Roost: A Hip Hop Feminist Breaks it Down*
- 2/20 Morgan's *When Chickenheads Come to Roost: A Hip Hop Feminist Breaks it Down*. (Finish 1<sup>st</sup> half of book)

**Week 7: Hip Hop Feminism? (continued)**

- 2/25 Morgan's When Chickenheads Come to Roost: A Hip Hop Feminist Breaks it Down (finish book)
- 2/27 Phillips, Layli, Kerri Reddick-Morgan and Dionne P. Stephens  
2005 Oppositional Consciousness within an Oppositional Realm: The Case of Feminism and Womanism in Rap and Hip Hop, 1976-2004. *The Journal of African American History* 90(3): 253-277.  
Academy & Mass Consumer Culture: Hip Hop (blog post)

**\*\*Try to get a head start on Section 2 of Homegirls Make Some Noise over Spring Break**

**Week 8: Sex, Sexuality, and Hip Hop**

- 3/11 Collins, Patricia Hill  
Why Black Sexual Politics? *In Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*. New York: Routledge.  
Hunter, Margaret  
2011 Shake it, Baby, Shake it: Consumption and the New Gender Relation in Hip-Hop. *Sociological Perspectives* 54(1): 15-36.
- 3/13 Section 2 of Homegirls Make Some Noise, but DO NOT read the Andreana Clay and the Fatima Muhammad pieces yet.

**Week 9: Sex, Sexuality, and Hip Hop (continued)**

- 3/18 Ross, Jasmine N. and Nicole M. Coleman  
2011 Gold Digger or Video Girl: The salience of an emerging hip-hop sexual script. *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 13(2): 157-171.  
Stokes, Carla E.  
2007 Representin' in Cyberspace: Sexual Scripts, Self-Definition, and Hip Hop Culture in Black American Adolescent Girls' Home Pages. *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 9(2): 160-184.
- 3/20 Balaji, Murali  
2010 Vixen Resistin': Redefining Black Womanhood in Hip-Hop Music Videos. *Journal of Black Studies* 41(1): 5-20.

**Week 10: Homotexualities and Queering the Mic**

- 3/25 Dyson, Michael Eric  
2008 Homotexualities: The Bible, Sexual Ethics, and the Theology of Homoeroticism. Interview with Michael Eric Dyson *In The Michael Eric Dyson Reader*. New York: Basic Civitas Books.  
"All Things Considered": A Conversation with Kiese Laymon. (pdf on Sakai)

- 3/27 Shimeles, Nebeu  
2010 I Love My Niggas No Homo: Homophobia and the Capitalist Subversion of Violent Masculinity in Hip Hop. *Critical Theory and Social Justice Journal of Undergraduate Research, Occidental College* 1: 1-26.
- Week 11: Homotexualities and Queering the Mic (continued)**
- 4/1 Hill, Marc Lamont  
2009 Scared Straight: Hip-Hop, Outing, and the Pedagogy of Queerness. *Review of Education, Pedagogy and Cultural Studies* 31(1): 29-54.  
Galis-Menendez, Silvia  
2013 Coming Out and Keepin' It Real: Frank Ocean, Big Freedia, and Hip-Hop Performances, *In Why Hip-Hop is Queer: Using Queer Theory to Examine identity Formation in Rap Music*, 69-87.
- 4/3 Smalls, Shante P.  
2011 'The Rain Comes Down': Jean Grae and Hip Hop Heteronormativity." *American Behavioral Scientist* 55(1): 86-95.  
Smith, Marquita R.  
2013 "Or a Real, Real Bad Lesbian": Nicki Minaj and the Acknowledgement of Queer Desire in Hip-Hop culture. *Popular Music and Society*.  
Clay, Andreana  
2007 'I used to be scared of the dick': Queer women of color and hip-hop masculinity. *In Homegirls Make Some Noise*, 148-166.
- Week 12: Social Death? Implications for the Global Projection of the Black Body**
- 4/8 Muhammad, Fatima  
2007 How NOT to be 21<sup>st</sup> Century Venus Hottentots. *In Homegirls Make Some Noise: Hip Hop Feminism Anthology*, pp. 115-140.  
Carrington, Ben  
2002 'Race,' Representation, and the Sporting Body. *University of Brighton*.
- 4/10 "Wallowing in the contradictions, Part 1 and 2": An interview with Frank Wilderson
- Week 13: Social Death? Implications for the Global Projection of the Black Body (cont.)**
- 4/15 Haartman, Saidiya V. and Frank B. Wilderson III  
"The Position of the Unthought": An interview with Saidiya V. Hartman, conducted by Frank B. Wilderson III. *Qui Parle* 13(2): 183-201.

**Woods, Tryon P.**

**2013 "Beat It like a Cop": The Erotic Cultural Politics of Punishment in the Era of Postracialism. Social Text 31(1): 21-41.**

**4/17**

**Sexton, Jared**

**Ante-Anti-Blackness: Afterthoughts. (online article uploaded to Sakai)**

**Week 14: Concluding thoughts/Future questions**

**4/22**

**Course conclusion/tie up any loose ends**

**Interdisciplinary connections**

**Distribution of take home final exam**