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Office hours: Tues/Wed/Thurs 2:30-3:30
and by appt.

HIST219 Special Topics in U.S. History:
Queer Black History
Winter 2016
TTH 12:40-2:30
Dewing 311

This course will introduce students to the historical study of LGBTQ African Americans in the 19th and 20th centuries. We will analyze primary sources such as letters, diaries, newspaper articles and blues songs, along with historical and interdisciplinary scholarship and films to learn about the experiences of same-sex loving and gender transgressing African Americans in the past. Topics to be covered will include: queering the Middle Passage; sex and power during chattel slavery; romantic friendships between women; scientific racism and sexology; the Great Migration; the Harlem Renaissance; sexuality in the Civil Rights and Black Power movements; Black lesbian feminism; the role of African Americans in the gay liberation movement; responses to the AIDS crisis and the intersection of gender and sexuality in the contemporary Black Lives Matter movement.
Course objectives:

- to gain knowledge of how the experiences of LGBTQ African Americans have changed over time
- understanding the central themes at the intersection of African American history and queer history
- conduct and present independent research on a topic of their choice

Evaluation and assignments:

Class participation: (10%)
Your participation grade will reflect how well you have contributed to the collective project of the course. Class participation consists of attendance, reading and other preparation for class, and significant informed participation in class discussion. All of the assigned material is **required** reading, and in order to do well in the course it is crucial to keep up with the readings. If you’re having difficulty keeping up, or if you fall behind, please come see me so that we can discuss ways to read more quickly and effectively. **You are required to bring the day’s reading with you to class.**

Discussion questions and leading class discussion (10%)
Two or three students per class will collaboratively write discussion questions based on the assigned reading and will be responsible for leading approximately 15-20 minutes of class discussion. Everyone will lead class discussion twice. Discussion questions will be pre-circulated via Moodle so that the rest of the class has time to read them before class. The discussion questions (aim for 3-5 questions) should be substantive and provocative – that is, they should engage with both the reading and the broader themes of the course, as well as sparking a lively discussion. Questions should be concise (no more than 2 sentences), but avoid informational or explanatory questions that have yes/no or right/wrong answers.

It takes time to write a thoughtful discussion question, so don’t leave it until the last minute. **Questions should be posted to Moodle by 9pm the night before class. Plan ahead!**

**Paper #1: Doing Queer Black History due Jan 15 (10%)**
How does the film *The Watermelon Woman* help us understand what it means to “do” (study and create) Queer Black History? What are some of the methodological issues/problems that are specific to this field? Use the film and the two articles by Matt Richardson to answer this question. 2-3 pages.

**Paper #2: Queering the Blues paper due Jan 29 (15%)**
Using the secondary sources by Garber, Carby and blues songs as your primary sources, discuss the significance of queer blues songs and their popularity in the early Great Migration. 3-4 pages.
Mid-term Exam Feb 11 (15%)  
The midterm exam tests for comprehension of class material (readings, lectures, discussions, films) to date. The exam will include both short-answer (usually identification) and essay questions.

8-10 page Research Paper due March 8: (20%)  
In this course, you will research a topic or historical subject relevant to African American LGBT history. We will work on the project in stages; each intermediate step will be graded and will count toward the final grade of your research project. 
- *Topic and sources* [10% of project grade] due Feb 4  
- *Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography* [10% of project grade] due Feb 18  
- *Introduction and Thesis* [15% of project grade] due Feb 25  
- *Presentation* [15% of project grade]  
- *Research paper* [50% of project grade]  
During the last week of classes, you’ll give a short presentation on your topic.

Take Home Final Exam due March 15: (20%)  
The final exam tests for comprehension of class material (readings, lectures, discussions, films) over the entire quarter --it is CUMULATIVE. Since it is a take-home exam, your typed, double-spaced answer must be well-written and well-argued and intelligently and creatively incorporate the class material.

Course Policies

**Attendance:**  
*Given the collaborative nature of this class, it is critical that we are all present every day.* Absences and habitual lateness will have a detrimental affect on your grade. If you will not be in class, please let me know ahead of time; if that is impossible, let me know as soon as possible afterwards.

Obviously, whether you are in class or not (even in cases with valid excuses), you are responsible for all of the material presented. This means that both procedural material – the unlikely, but not unprecedented, changing of a due date, for example – and substantive material – the ideas, events, and themes covered in each discussion.

**Contacting me:**  
You may contact me by stopping by my office during my office hours or via email. Please feel free to email me with any questions you might have, but remember two things: allow 24 hours for a response, and check the syllabus and Moodle first. I will often use email as a means of communicating with you between class meetings. Please be sure that you regularly check your K account.
**Technology use:**
Please use technology responsibly. As for your own technological devices, common sense and common courtesy dictate the rules. Turn off your ringer, don’t text in class, and don’t use your laptop for anything other than taking notes and accessing course content.

**Assignments:**
Assignments must be handed in (or posted to Moodle) at the times listed in the syllabus. *Unexcused late papers will be marked down a full letter grade (10 points) for the first day, and half a letter grade (5 points) for each additional grade.*

I give extensions rarely and only in cases of true emergency. If you do not turn in all of the required papers and assignments, you may receive a failing grade (F) in this course.

**Inclusive learning:**
I am committed to giving all students the opportunity to succeed in my course, regardless of learning abilities or background. If you have a learning disability and would like to speak to someone about accommodations, please make an appointment with the Associate Dean of Students. If you have a documented disability, see me at least a week prior to an exam to make the necessary arrangements.

**Plagiarism:**
*I take academic honesty very seriously.* By enrolling at Kalamazoo College, you have entered an academic learning community. Because this community values ideas and knowledge so highly, we operate under an honor code which requires us to acknowledge the creators of any words, images, ideas, or other material we refer to that are not our own. Failing to give such credit is considered plagiarism and is a serious academic offense which can result in failure of the course and, possibly, more severe penalties.

**Preparing for Class: Becoming Active Readers**
This class demands collective commitment to succeed. This means that everyone should come ready to work – that is, you have not just *read* the assignment, but you have also *thought about* what you want to do with it in the class. For each day, you should be reflecting on what you read: questioning, challenging, and applying the course material to things outside the classroom. In short, you must become *active readers*. This means tossing out your highlighter and picking up a pen.

**You should be taking two types of notes:**
- Take marginal notes while reading – jot down the main ideas of important paragraphs to help you recall information quickly.
- After finishing an article or essay take a moment to write some notes to yourself on a separate piece of paper. Try to sum up the main idea of the article in a sentence or two; then, write down notes and questions that will help you talk about the reading in class.

**To help you prepare for class discussion, consider the following:**
- What is the main point/idea of the reading?
- What is a specific example given that demonstrates this main point?
What questions do you have about the reading? Is there anything you didn’t understand?

What did you learn from the reading? How or what are you thinking differently about as a consequence of reading the assignment?

Which reading(s) particularly engaged you and why?

Is there a passage or two that you’d like the class to think about? A discussion point or question?

**Course Schedule and Reading Assignments:**

*All course readings will be available on Moodle. Readings subject to change.*

**Week 1: Introduction**

**Tue Jan 5:** Introduction to the class

**Th Jan 7:** Dr. Woolner will be at the American Historical Assoc. conference in Atlanta.

**Watch in class:** *The Watermelon Woman* (Cheryl Dunye, 1996). *You will be reading and writing about the film for next week, so come to class!*

**Week 2: Theorizing African American Queer Histories / Queering the Middle Passage and Slavery**


**Friday Jan 15: Paper #1 due on Moodle by 5pm.**

**Week 3: Women’s Romantic Friendships**


**Week 4: The Rise of Black Queer Subcultures**


Hazel Carby, “‘It Jus Be's Dat Way Sometime’: The Sexual Politics of Women's Blues,” *Radical America* 20, no. 4, pp. 9-22.


**Watch in class:** *T'Ain't Nobody's Bizness: Queer Blues Divas of the 1920s* (Robert Philipson, 2010).


Primary sources: newspaper articles used in Dr. Woolner’s article

**Paper #2 due on Moodle by Friday Jan 29 @5pm**

**Week 5: Race and Sexology**


**Th Feb 4:** Primary sources: sexological case studies

**Due in class:** Topic and sources for research paper
Week 6: Civil Rights


Th Feb 11: MIDTERM EXAM

Week 7: Black Feminism & Gay Liberation Movements


Watch online: *Pay It No Mind: The Marsha P. Johnson Story*

Due in class: Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography for research paper

Week 8: Black Masculinity and the HIV/AIDS Crisis


Due in class: Introduction and Thesis for research paper
Week 9: Ballroom Culture

**Tue Mar 1:** George Chauncey, “‘In the Life’ in Harlem,” *Gay New York: The Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*, pp. 244-267.

**Primary sources:** Newspaper coverage of 1920s-30s drags balls in the black press.


**WATCH:** *Paris Is Burning*, Jennie Livingston, 1990 (72 min).
Madonna, Vogue. (A viewing may be arranged outside of class, TBD)

bell hooks, “Is Paris Burning?”

Week 10: Queer & Trans Black Lives Matter/Research Paper Presentations

**Tue Mar 8:** Alicia Garza, *A Herstory of the Black Lives Matters Movement Violence Against Black Trans Women Goes Largely Ignored A New Queer Agenda*
Research paper presentations

**Th Mar 10:** Research paper presentations

**Take home final exam due Mar 15.**