ENGL 081 900
WOMANIFESTO: BLACK WOMEN WRITERS in LITERATURE and MUSIC

11-WEEK SUMMER SESSION
2017

(*this course is cross-listed with AFRC 081-900 and MUSC 082-900—fulfills the Cultural Diversity in U.S. sector requirement*)

Melanie R. Hill
Tuesday 5:00-8:50 PM
Room: TBA

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Course Overview:

How is the literary voice of the black woman writer musically portrayed? Using Jazz, Gospel, Neo-Soul, and Hip-Hop music genres, this course will explore the performance of the black woman’s voice in 20th century literature and music. From writers Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker, and Natalie Baszile to musicians, Jill Scott, Lauryn Hill, Erykah Badu, India Arie, and Nina Simone, we will analyze how these writers/artists used their pens and musical voices to assert social freedom. We will pay particular attention to the writings of Zora Neale Hurston and the music of Jill Scott. As both text and performance, prose and poetry, literature and music, the novels and songs of these artists offer excellent resources for our investigation of the literary and musical performance of the black woman writer and vocalist.

You will be able to purchase the following required texts at the Penn Book Center at 130 South 34th Street in Philadelphia.

Required Texts:

Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes were Watching God
I Live in Music, Ntozake Shange
Toni Morrison, Tar Baby
Maya Angelou, *Gather Together in My Name*

Jacqueline Woodson, *Brown Girl Dreaming*

*Recommended Texts* (*the following texts are recommended; they are only for further resource information for you—you do not have to purchase these for class*):

- Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Editor—*Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*
- Toni Cade Bambara, *The Black Woman*
- Trudier Harris—*Saints, Sinners, Saviors: Strong Black Women in African-American Literature*
- Thomas F. DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez, Editors—*Black Performance Theory*
- Paul Allen Anderson: *Deep River: Music and Memory in Harlem Renaissance Thought*
- Zora N. Hurston, *The Sanctified Church: The Folklore Writings of Zora Neale Hurston*
- Dolan Hubbard, *The Sermon and the African-American Literary Imagination*
- Richard J. Douglass-Chin, *Preacher Woman Sings the Blues*

**Academic Honesty:** Any student who violates basic codes of academic conduct—through plagiarism, cheating on exams or assignments, double submission of papers, or any other means, can expect to fail the course and face disciplinary action from the University. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, please see the University of Pennsylvania’s Code of Academic Integrity at [http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/osl/acadint.html](http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/osl/acadint.html).

**Email:** Please check your email regularly. Feel free to discuss any questions you have regarding the material we flesh out during class with me after class/office hours or via email.

**Assignments:** You are expected to read all of the texts and attend class *prepared*. Class participation is essential to each student’s full development in this course. I expect each student to attend class ready to delve into each text and discuss the materials in an engaging manner. Attendance is mandatory. Any unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your final grade by ⅓ of a grade for each unexcused absence (e.g. from A- to B+). If you cannot attend class due to an illness, it is important that you email me in advance.
Attendance: 20%
Class participation: 20%
Reading Responses: 20%
Final paper/project: 40%

All Research Exercise Written Assignments need to be submitted to Canvas the day BEFORE our scheduled class by 6PM.

One reading response of (1-2 pages single-spaced) on the readings/music discussion will be submitted to Canvas before each scheduled class. (*professor will keep students updated for any summer session amendments to this*)

Final Paper Project Proposals will be due by Tuesday, June 27, 2017.

(*Subject to change for 11-Week Summer Session*) In the middle of the 11-week summer session, you will turn in a final project proposal (3-5 pages double-spaced) that you can later incorporate into your final project. There are three forms this can take:

(*For 11-Week Summer Session students, most of my students in the past have elected to do a creative final project). This final project presentation will be due on the last day of class, Tuesday, August 1st (along with your paper of 5-7 pages double-spaced, describing your project). Some students have submitted film, spoken word, etc. for their final creative projects. Make this FUN! (*Some details will be amended for the 11-Week Summer Session)(*professor will keep students updated for any amendments*)

1. If you are doing a creative final project, you must turn in a formal proposal stating the project, its goals, and the research that will underlie it. Your proposal should be as clear and specific as possible, as this will form part of the basis on which I evaluate your final project. In the proposal, you must pay equal attention to the planned creative project and to the research that scaffolds it.

If you are doing a critical essay, you have two options:

2. A literature review analyzing and synthesizing the current scholarly conversation about your topic. Your literature review should not simply be a summary of others’ arguments. Rather, you must make clear the intervention that your essay will make in the field, and the thesis of your own argument.

3. A close reading of three non-consecutive passages from the major text you will be analyzing in the final project. These passages should be central to the argument you want to make about that text; that is, rather than selecting random quotations, make sure to choose passages that can help you develop a strong argument about the text.
As with option two, your proposal should make the thesis and structure of your essay clear.

*Class syllabus is subject to change ONLY by the discretion of the professor*

Class Meetings:

Tuesday, May 23:
*First Day of Class*
Introductions/Ice Breaker—Memory Challenge Game/
Performance Practice Discussion/Music's Muse

Lauryn Hill Discourse Part I

“To Zion”
“I Find it Hard to Say”
*Jacqueline Woodson, Brown Girl Dreaming*

Monday, May 29: MEMORIAL DAY—NO CLASS

Tuesday, May 30th:
Music’s Muse Discussion Cont’d

*Beyoncé’s Lemonade visual album*
*Warsan Shire poetry excerpts*

Lauryn Hill Discourse Cont’d

Performance Practice Exercise due via Canvas

*Brown Girl Dreaming* Discussion Cont’d

Tuesday, June 6th:

Brown Girl Dreaming, Jacqueline Woodson

Jill Scott Womansfesto Discussion
Tuesday, June 13th: Jazz, Spoken Word, and the Dynamics of the Black Woman’s Voice

Jill Scott Womanifesto Discussion Cont’d

I Live in Music, Ntozake Shange

*Recommended Text*: Deep River: Music and Memory in Harlem Renaissance Thought

Tuesday, June 20th:

I Live in Music, Ntozake Shange

Jill Scott Album Discussion, “Woman” (2015) *download album from iTunes or Amazon to participate in music performance discussion

Music’s Muse Discussion Cont’d

Creative Project Presentation Paper Proposals Due Today

Tues. June 27th:

SONIC LANGUAGE SERIES PART I

Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God

Tuesday, July 4th: INDEPENDENCE DAY—NO CLASS

Tuesday, July 11th: SONIC LANGUAGE SERIES PART II

Hurston, Their Eyes discussion cont’d

Jill Scott’s 2011 album, The Light of the Sun

Performance Practice Assignment Due

LOOKING FOR ZORA essay
Begin reading Toni Morrison’s, *Tar Baby*

**Tues. July 18th:**
SONIC LANGUAGE SERIES PART III

Toni Morrison, Tar Baby discussion

**Tuesday, July 25th:**
Finish-up creative project presentations preparation
Maya Angelou, *Gather Together in My Name*

**Tues. August 1st:**

**LAST DAY OF CLASS**
CREATIVE PERFORMANCE PROJECT PRESENTATIONS
WOMANIFESTO: BLACK WOMEN WRITERS IN LITERATURE AND MUSIC

Exploring the distinguished literary canon of twentieth-century African-American women writers from Zora Neale Hurston and Toni Morrison to Maya Angelou and Ntozake Shange, this course will examine black women's writing through fiction, poetry, and drama. In addition, we will also survey black women's writing in music. Using Jazz, Gospel, and Hip-Hop music pieces from artists Jill Scott, Lauryn Hill, and Beyoncé, we will consider how these writers and musicians use their pens and musical voices to assert political and social freedom.

INSTRUCTOR: MELANIE R. HILL

ENGL 081-900
11-WEEK SESSION
MAY 22-AUGUST 4, 2017
TUESDAY 5:00 PM-8:50 PM
CROSS-LISTINGS: AFRC 081-900 MUSC 082-900
Fulfills “Cultural Diversity in US” sector requirement