

African American Studies 491
Black Masculinity
Fall 2013

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Course Description

The theories and ideas about Black masculinity went through a transformation after World War II and continued to evolve during the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Black Power Movement. Black men came back from the war determined to receive and live up to idealized and dominate forms of masculinity. Within trying to obtain this idealized masculinity, African American men adapted and repurposed these ideas to meet their own needs making it uniquely theirs. Each era after the war, African American men negotiated, challenged, redefined, and created their own masculinities based on race, class, and even geography. The Hip Hop generation inherited various and contradicting forms of masculinity. In the late 20th and early 21st century, Black masculinity complexities broadened and were amplified by the media, the war on drugs, and hip hop culture. This course will examine the historical roots of Black masculinity to understand the complexities of Black male performance in the 21st century. Some of the themes we will explore include sex and sexuality, crime and violence, middle-class values and lifestyles, the role of “cool”, Hip Hop, Black Power, Black feminism and womanism, the media, and family.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be introduced to theories of Black masculinity, Black feminism, and womanism.
2. Students will discuss the history of African American men from 1950s to today.
3. Students will synthesize theories of Black masculinity, Black feminism, and womanism, and the history of African American men to analyze black men in the 21st century.
4. Students will outline the major movements, figures, ideals, and scholarship of the twentieth and twentieth-first centuries. Students will explain how Black masculinity has evolved over the last 70+ years.
5. Students will be able to answer the question “What is Black Masculinity?,” in their own words.
6. Explain the relationship between Black masculinity and other perspectives, including but not limited to Black feminism, womanism, Afrocentrism, and Black Nationalism.

7. Students will establish connections between disciplines and pursue knowledge through a variety of sources.
8. Students will analyze print and non-print materials, make comparisons of particulars, and draw and support conclusions.

Required Text & Readings

Books

Athena Mutua, *ed. Progressive Black Masculinities*

Steve Estes, *I Am A Man: Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights Movement*

Ronald L. Jackson II, *Scripting the Black Masculine Body: Identity, Discourse, and Racial Politics in Popular Media*

Ronald L. Jackson II and Mark Hopson ed. *Masculinity in the Black Imagination: Politics of Communicating Race and Manhood*

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*

Articles

“Cool Pose: Black Masculinity and Sports,” by Richard Majors in the *Masculinities Reader* edited by Stephen Whitehead and Frank Barrett

“Rap Music and the Demonization of Young Black Males,” in USA Today, May 1994 by Tricia Rose

“Gangstas and Playas in the Dirty South,” chapter 5 by Riche Richardson in *Black Masculinity and the U.S. South*

“The Fight for Black Men,” in Newsweek, June 2013 by Joshua Dubois

Suggested Readings

The Womanist Reader Layli Phillips

Traps: African American Men on Gender and Sexuality Rudolph Byrd & Beverly Guy-Sheftall

Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment Patricia Hill Collins

Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology E. Patrick Johnson and Mae Henderson

Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminists Movements in

America's Second Wave Benita Roth

E. Patrick Johnson *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South*

Grading Scale

| | | | | | |
|---|--------|---|-------|---|----------|
| A | 100-90 | C | 79-70 | F | Below 60 |
| B | 89-80 | D | 69-70 | | |

| <u>Assignments</u> | <u>Percentage</u> | <u>Due Date</u> |
|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Participation | 25% | Daily |
| Multimedia Website | 20% | Weekly |
| Midterm | 10% | 10/14 |
| Final | 20% | 11/22 |
| Semester Project | 25% | 12/03 |

Requirements:

Website:

Students will create a multimedia website with original content using WordPress.com. Your website must have the following components: a home page, about me page, and a continuously updated blog, however feel free to add additional components or more pages to your site if you would like (this can be your semester project). The home page should be designed as a gateway to the theme of her/his site. The about me page must include information describing who you are, what your theme is/what your blog is about, why you chose your theme and what you hope to accomplish through publication of this blog. Each website should have a theme related to the class. For example, it could be African American men and athletics, African American men and television, African American men and rap music, but it also could be a general theme site on African American men and popular culture. Each week the student should write at least one blog post that covers the readings, lecture/discussion, and addresses her/his theme. It is required that the first blog post of that week covers and engages the readings. The week runs from Sunday to Saturday and the first week of required blog posts is the week of September 1st-7th. If you wait until Saturday to make your post make sure it is up before midnight EST.

Your blog post should adhere to the norms of blogging and academic writing. Blogging usually includes photographs, graphics, linking, embedding videos, embedding music/audio, and the use of the personal pronouns. The academic conventions that must

be followed are clear grammar and spelling, thesis/argument, proving your point with evidence, citing resources using in-text citations, and systematic paragraphing (introduction, content paragraphs, and conclusion). There is no minimum amount to write however not writing enough may adversely effect your grade. Please look over the rubric at the end of the syllabus to see what you will be graded on and how much each component weighs.

Exams:

The class will have a midterm and a final exam. These will cover the readings, lectures, and discussions. You will be expected to know the theories, important people, critiques, history, and even project your opinion of the future of Black masculinity. The format of exam questions may include T/F, Multiple Choice, Short Answer, Fill in the Blank, and Essays.

Semester Project:

In consultation with the professor, the students will work individually, in groups, or with the professor and design her/his own semester project. Students wanting to work in groups must put their own team together, but groups are limited to 2-3 people. It is required that students writes up a proposal outlining her/his/their project detailing the project and the presentation. The semester project must deal with Black masculinity from World War II until today and address a theme covered in the course with a critical analysis. Students may continue her/his website's theme and expand it or create a documentary film, create a play/skit depicting Black masculinity, and a host of other creative outlets. In addition, students could carry out an oral history project or folklore collection. These projects are meant to capture the human element of Black masculinity by interviewing and analyzing lived experiences and/or ideas about Black Masculinity. For example, a student may know three or four World War II veterans and could interview them about what it meant to be a Black man fighting in the war. Students would research the experiences of African Americans during the war, in preparation for forming an asking poignant questions, and then analyze what their interviewees said similar to the way E. Patrick Johnson wrote *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South*. Also, the student may elect to write a 17-20 page paper but all students must get prior approval before beginning the project. Towards the end of the semester, every student/group is required to present the project in a compelling manner, which must include the findings, and the analysis. The presentation should match the type of project the student completed. Please use and consider a variety of presentation methods, excluding Power Point or lecture-style reading and speaking.

Participation:

Each student is expected to contribute to the dialogue/discourse/discussion.

You may participate by:

1. Asking poignant questions about the readings, lectures, and/or discussions.
2. Responding to a question asked by the professor, faculty, guest speakers, or other class members.
3. Making an analytical comment or observation.

4. Bring in newspaper/magazine/media that deals with an aspect of class that we are currently discussing or have discussed.

It is necessary and important for you to read the assigned readings prior to coming to class to be able to fully participate and contribute to class. I would advise you to follow my example on how to discuss the material in class—integrating readings, discussions, and outside materials from other courses.

At the end of the syllabus, you will find a series of questions numbered 1-9 (pages 12-20). I have provided this for your benefit to help you prepare for the exams. You should prepare responses to one of these for each reading once we are finished with the book/theme depending on the assignment. My goal is for it to become a quick resource for you as you study and prepare for exams and it is a good practice when you go off to graduate school.

Attendance:

Attendance is vital during the semester and I will be taking attendance daily. The student will receive three days of unexcused absences before her/his attendance adversely affects their grade. After the 3rd absence, the course grade will be dropped one letter grade per occurrence. For example, if you missed 4 days and had an A in the class, the new grade would be a B for the two extra days. Of course, emergencies happen and will be considered only with written documentation (doctor's note, funeral program, traffic accident, ticket, etc). Also, tardies will be counted. Tardy constitutes being more than ten minutes late or leaving before the end of the class session. Two tardies will count as one absence, so please come to class on time. When the projects start, attendance is mandatory and you must be on time to hear your classmates' presentations. The ten-minute rule is not observed during projects because it is rude to walk in late during someone's presentation. If you do not show up during the presentations or leave early, you will receive a 0 on your project and these projects are 25% of your final grade.

Excused Absences for Students Representing the University

Students who represent the university (athletes and others) do not choose their schedules. Student athletes are required to attend games and/or meets. All student athletes should provide their schedule to the instructor at the beginning of the semester. The Intercollegiate Athletic Council strongly encourages faculty to treat missed classes or exams (because of a scheduling conflict) as excused absences and urges faculty to work with the students to make up the work or exam.

All work is due when specified and late materials will not be accepted unless accompanied with written documentation (e.g. doctor's note, funeral program). If you have an emergency please contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss how to handle the assignment.

E-mail Policy:

Electronic mail or "e-mail" is considered an official method for communication at VCU because it delivers information in a convenient, timely, cost effective and

environmentally aware manner. Students are expected to check their official VCU e-mail on a frequent and consistent basis in order to remain informed of university-related communications. The university recommends checking e-mail daily. Students are responsible for the consequences of not reading, in a timely fashion, university-related communications sent to their official VCU student e-mail account. This policy ensures that all students have access to this important form of communication. It ensures students can be reached through a standardized channel by faculty and other staff of the university as needed. Mail sent to the VCU e-mail address may include notification of university-related actions, including disciplinary action. Please read the policy in its entirety: <http://www.ts.vcu.edu/kb/3407.html>

VCU Honor System: Upholding Academic Integrity

The VCU Honor System policy describes the responsibilities of students, faculty and administration in upholding academic integrity, while at the same time respecting the rights of individuals to the due process offered by administrative hearings and appeals. According to this policy, "Members of the academic community are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity." In addition, "All members of the VCU community are presumed to have an understanding of the VCU Honor System and are required to:

- Agree to be bound by the Honor System policy and its procedures;
- Report suspicion or knowledge of possible violations of the Honor System;
- Support an environment that reflects a commitment to academic integrity;
- Answer truthfully when called upon to do so regarding Honor System cases, and,
- Maintain confidentiality regarding specific information in Honor System cases."

[View the Honor System](#) in its entirety. More information can also be found on the [Division of Student Affairs](#) website.

Students with Disabilities

SECTION 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended require that VCU provides "academic adjustments" or "reasonable accommodations" to any student who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. To receive accommodations, students must request them by contacting the Disability Support Services Office on the Monroe Park Campus (828-2253) or the Division for Academic Success on the MCV campus (828-9782). More information is available at [Disability Support Services](#) or the [Division for Academic Success](#).

Any student who has a disability that requires an academic accommodation should schedule a meeting with the instructor at the student's earliest convenience. Additionally, if coursework requires the student to work in a lab environment, the student should advise the instructor or a department chairperson of any concerns that the student may have regarding safety issues related to a disability. Students should follow this procedure for all courses in the academic semester.

Statement on Military Short-Term Training or Deployment

If military students receive orders for short-term training or deployment, they should inform and present their orders to Military Student Services and to their professor(s). For further information on policies and procedures contact Military Services at 828-5993 or access the [corresponding policies](#).

Student Conduct in the Classroom

Students, as well as faculty, have a responsibility for creating and maintaining an environment that supports effective instruction. In order for faculty members (including graduate teaching assistants) to provide and students to receive effective instruction in classrooms, laboratories, studios, online courses, and other learning areas, the university expects students to conduct themselves in an orderly and cooperative manner." Among other things, cell phones and beepers should be turned off while in the classroom. Also, the university Rules and Procedures prohibit anyone from having "in his possession any firearm, other weapon, or explosive, regardless of whether a license to possess the same has been issued, without the written authorization of the President of the university..." For more information, visit the [VCU Insider online](#).

Eating in class is acceptable if it is a snack e.g. potato chips, candy bar, or a drink. Please do not bring a full course meal to class and expect to eat it. I do not allow the use of laptops, iPads, or any other computing device to be used during class unless absolutely necessary. However, if you are caught using it for Facebook, surf the internet, play games, anything that is not dealing with the class then you will lose the privilege of having the ability to use the device in the class for the rest of the semester.

Please no hats, caps, sunglasses, or any other headgear unless you need them for religious purposes ("bad hair days" are not a reason that I accept and this policy is for men and women). Remove these items prior to entering the classroom even if you are early. Please as much as possible—ladies do not wear revealing clothing that is either too short, too loose, too tight, etc. and gentlemen refrain from sagging your pants to show undergarments, wearing revealing clothing that is also too tight, too short, too loose, etc.

INCOMPLETE GRADES:

An Incomplete grade is assigned when extenuating circumstances, such as illness, the death of a family member, or a family emergency, prevent a student from completing assignments and other course requirements by the end of the semester. An incomplete grade must be changed by the deadline specified on the college calendar or will be automatically changed to an "F." The removal of an "I" grade does not guarantee a passing grade.

My professor often said, "The law of common courtesy has not yet been repealed." I hope that we will engage in many debates over the semester. I expect that we will all treat each other and each other's ideas with respect.

| Schedule | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|
| Date | Topics & Activities | Readings Due | Lecture | Assignments Due |
| 08/23 | Introductions | | | |
| 08/26 | What is Black Gender Studies? An Exploration of Black Feminism, Womanism, and Black Masculinity theories | Mutua Ch. 1, 3, 4, & 5 | Black Feminism and Womanism | |
| 09/02 | Civil Rights & Black Power | Estes Intro-Ch. 2 | Second Wave Feminism And Black Power | Websites up First blog entry by Saturday midnight EST |
| 09/09 | Civil Rights & Black Power Continued | Estes Ch. 3-7 | Second Wave Feminism And the Birth of Hip Hop | Blog Post 2 |
| 09/16 | Hip Hop | Mutua Ch. 11 Jackson Ch. 4 Richardson (Handout) Rose (Handout) | Black Masculinity and Hip Hop Generation | Blog Post 3 |
| 09/23 | Black Male Body Politics Gender Performance & Scripts | Jackson Intro-Ch. 2 Jackson & Hopson Ch. 3 & Jackson Ch. 3 | | Blog Post 4 |
| 09/30 | Sports and Black Masculinity Sneaking into my Frat | Majors (Handout) & Jackson & Hopson Ch. 8 Jackson & Hopson Ch. 2 | Black Fraternalism and Black Masculinity | Blog Post 5 |
| 10/07 | Black Masculinity and Popular culture | Jackson & Hopson Ch. 4, | Queer Masculinity | Blog Post 6 |

| | | | |
|--------------|------------------------------|--|---|
| | & Review | 5, 6, 7 & Mutua Ch. 10 | |
| 10/14 | Midterm Exam | | Midterm |
| 10/17- 20 | FALL BREAK | | |
| 10/21 | Prison Industrial Complex | Mutua Ch. 8 & 9, Jackson & Hopson Ch. 11 | Blog Post 7 |
| | | Alexander Intro-Ch. 2 | |
| 10//29 | Prison Industrial Complex | Alexander Ch. 3 & 4 | Blog Post 8 |
| | | | Last Day to receive a W for a Withdrawal is 11/01/2013 |
| 10/31 | Prison Industrial Complex | Alexander Ch. 5 & 6 | |
| 11/05 | Family | Mutua Ch. 15 | Blog Post 9 |
| 11/07 | Family | Jackson & Hopson Ch. 10 & 12 | |
| 11/12 | Future | Mutua Ch. 12- 14 | Blog Post 10 |
| 11/14 | Future | Jackson Ch. 5 & Epilogue & Jackson & Hopson Ch. 9 | |
| 11/19 | Future & Review | | |
| 11/22 | Final Exam | | Final Exam |
| 11/25 | NO CLASS | | |
| 11/27 | Thanksgiving Break | | |
| 12/02 | Projects Presentations | | Project Presentations |
| 12/ | Projects Presentations | | Project Presentations |

*****The Syllabus & Schedule is subject to change*****
Some readings may be added or others may be taken away

Evaluation for Class Presentations

Prof. Lanois

Type of Presentation: _____

Evaluation: 5=best to 1=No Credit

1. Imagination: 1 2 3 4 5
Uniqueness of the class presentation

2. Organization 1 2 3 4 5
Extent of preparedness and flow of the presentation

3. Substance: 1 2 3 4 5
Relevance to Black Masculinities. How well did the project blend culture and history?

4. Creativity: 1 2 3 4 5
How well did imagination and substance blend together to make a clear statement?

5. Insight: 1 2 3 4 5
How well did the project give a sound understanding of Black masculinities, history, and culture?

6. Group Presentation: 1 2 3 4 5
Was everybody involved and was this involvement enthusiastic?

Overall:

A+ A- A B+ B B- C+ C C- D F

Comments

Name:

Date:

Single- or Jointly Authored Book

- 1) How would you summarize this book's/theme's topic, approach, and argument?

2) What would you identify as the book's/theme's key concept or theme? Why?

3) Describe the theoretical and/or analytical approach(es) the author(s) is using.

4) How effective is the analysis – what are its strengths and weaknesses?

- 5) Describe how this study relates to African American masculinities (topic, historical debates, periodization; similarities and differences; gender; leadership; community building/nation building).

- 6) What evidence is offered up to prove the thesis? Do you know of something that could have bolstered the argument or something that detracts the argument?

7) What are the key terms- people, places, and events?

8) What impressed or intrigued you the most about the book/theme? Why?

9) How would you connect this book/chapters to other books we have read?