

*And where the words of women are crying to
be heard, we must each of us recognize our
responsibility to seek those words out, to
read them and share them and examine them
in their pertinence to our lives.*

---AUDRE LORDE

Women's Studies 7060
BLACK WOMEN'S NARRATIVES
University of Georgia
Fall 2007

Professor: Dr. P. Bell-Scott
Email: pbscott@fcs.uga.edu
Office Hours: Before or after class or by appointment
Office: Family Science Center 2
Telephone: 542-4899

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Angelou, M. *I know why the caged bird sings*. New York: Bantam.
Bell-Scott, P. & Johnson-Bailey, J. . *Flat-footed truths: Telling Black women's lives*.
New York: Henry Holt.
Bell-Scott, P. *Life notes: Personal writings by contemporary Black women*. New York:
W. W. Norton.
hooks, b.. *Bone Black: Memories of Girlhood*. New York: Henry Holt.
Jacobs, H. *Incidents in the life of a slave girl*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University
Press.
Lorde, A. *Zami: A new spelling of my name/ biomythography*. Freedom, CA: The
Crossing Press.
Sapphire. *Push: A Novel*. New York: Random House.

OTHER MATERIALS:

Excerpts from Bell-Scott, P., et al. *Double Stitch: Black Women Write about Mothers and
Daughters*. New York: HarperCollins.

Additional readings are listed under the class schedule and other materials may also be
assigned.

OBJECTIVES:

- o to gain an understanding of how ethnicity, culture, class, gender, and socio-historical
context shape and are reflected in Black women's narratives.
- o to gain an understanding of theoretical perspectives and methodological issues in the
study and use of Black women's narratives.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

There are four requirements for this course:

1. *Integrative questions.* Each student must prepare a set of integrative questions for two topics. These questions are due via e-mail to the professor and facilitators by 12 noon on the first day a topic is discussed. Questions must draw from the primary sources and the secondary sources or audio-visual sources assigned. Students may also use other sources as supplement to but not as substitution for the required readings. Appropriate documentation must be provided. These questions may be selected by facilitators for class discussion and will be evaluated by the professor as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Each set of questions is worth five points, for a total of 10 points.
2. *Integrative essays.* Each student must write three (two averaging 10 pages, one averaging five pages) integrative essays which involve application of knowledge acquired from the assigned readings, audiovisual sources, class discussions, etc. The professor will distributed the essay questions two weeks before they are due. All essays must be coherent, typewritten and free of grammatical, typographical and spelling errors. Students must also provide documentation using the style manual standard for her/his discipline (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago). Each long essay is worth 25 points and the short essay is worth 10 points, totaling 60 points for all three essays. Only social security numbers, no names, should be provided with essays.
3. *Discussion facilitation.* Each student must serve as discussion facilitator twice during the quarter. This task entails: (1) stimulating class discussion of the assigned readings; (2) selecting integrative questions for sharing with the class; (3) supplementing class materials, where appropriate, with additional sources; e.g. audiovisuals, handouts, etc. This assignment is worth 20 points or 10 points for each turn as a facilitator.
4. *Poetry presentations.* Each student must select and share poems by two Black women. These poems should reveal something of their lives and relates in some way to the period or topic being studied is the goal. In addition to reading and giving a copy of the poem to the class, the student must provide a brief, bio-sketch and photo of the writer which includes place of birth, birth and death dates (where known), mention of other writings and other relevant life events. This info may be sent via computer file. Be sure to provide full citation of the source from which poetry was selected on the copy distributed. Poetry presentations should take no more than 5-7 minutes. This assignment is worth 10 points, five points for each presentation. A list of poets and information sources will be distributed. (Note: If you would like to do music or some other art form for this requirement, please speak to the professor).
4. *Attendance.* Regular attendance and participation is expected of each student. Those who miss class more than twice will lose five points for each additional absence.

SUMMARY OF GRADE CALCULATION:

Integrative questions	10	points
Integrative essays	60	points
Discussion facilitation	20	points
Poetry	<u>10</u>	<u>points</u>
	100	points

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READING ASSIGNMENTS AND COURSE SCHEDULE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Readings/Topics</u>
8/22-9/5	INTRODUCTION: THE EVOLUTION, USES, MEANING, AND FORMS OF NARRATIVE

Primary sources:

- Jacobs, H. *Incidents in the life of a slave girl.*
- Forten, C.. *The Journal of Charlotte Forten*, excerpt.
- The foreword, introduction, and all photographs and poetry in *Flat-footed Truths*.
- Blue, C. P. "Sometimes a poem is twenty years of memory." (LN).

Secondary sources:

- Brown, E. B. "African-American women's quilting: A framework for conceptualizing and teaching African-American women's history."
- Johnson-Bailey, J.. "Harriet Ann Buckley: An artist storyteller." (FFT)
- Fry, G-M. "Harriet Powers: Portrait of a Black quilter."
- Lorde, Audre. "Poetry is not a luxury." (FFT)
- Painter, N. "Representing Truth: Sojourner Truth's knowing." (FFT)
- Walker, Alice. "In search of our mothers' gardens."
- Widdershoven, G. A. M. "The story of life: Hermeneutic perspectives on the relationship between narratives and life history."

- 8/22--introduction discussion of Brown and quilting
- 8/29-9/5--discussion of Fry, Brown, photographs, Painter, Blue, Johnson-Bailey, Walker, Lorde, all poetry, Forten,
- 9/5--Widdershoven, Harriet Jacobs

Facilitators:

Poetry:

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9/12-19	NARRATIVES OF THE EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY
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Primary sources:

Bonner, M. "On being young--a woman--and colored."
DeCosta-Willis, M. ed. *The Memphis Diary of Ida B. Wells* (excerpt).
Hull, G. T.. *Give us each day: The diary of Alice Dunbar-Nelson* (excerpt).
Hurston, Z. *Mules and Men* (excerpt).
Hurston, Z. "What it feels like to be colored me."
Terrell, M. "A colored woman in a white world."
Williams, F. "A northern Negro's autobiography."

Secondary sources:

Carby, H. "It jus be's dat way sometime: The sexual politics of women's blues."
DeCosta-Willis, M. "To Miss Ida Bee with love." (FFT)
Hull, G. "Two-facing life": The duality of Alice Dunbar-Nelson.
Walker, A. "Looking for Zora." (FFT)

Other:

The Music of Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday

9/12—Both DeCosta-Willis (2), Bonner, Terrell, Williams, both Hull
9/19--Hurston, Walker, Carby, music

Facilitators:

Poetry:

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9/26-10/3 **NARRATIVES OF THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY**

Primary sources:

Angelou, Maya. *I know why the caged bird sings*.
Lorde, Audre. *Zami: A new spelling of my name*.
Johnson-Bailey, J. "Poet Sonia Sanchez: Telling what we must hear." (FFT)
Sanchez, S. "Dear Mama." (DS)

Secondary Sources:

Sanchez, S. "Bullet Holes of resistance." (LN).
Lorde, A. "The cancer journals." (LN)
Lorde, A. "Showing our true colors" (LN)

Other:

"Audre Lorde: Litany of Survival"

9/26--Angelou, Sanchez, and Johnson-Bailey
10/3-10/7--Lorde

Facilitators:

Poetry:

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10/10-10/24 **CONTEMPORARY NARRATIVES OF GIRLHOOD,
MOTHERHOOD AND IDENTITY**

Primary sources:

Life Notes, Foreword, Introduction, Parts One and Riley, Wells, McDonnell from Part Two, and Bennett-Alexander, from Part IV.

From DS:

Coleman, W. "Closets and keepsakes."

Holloway, K. "The Thursday ladies."

hooks, b. "Reflections of a 'good' daughter."

Bogus, S. "Mom de plume."

Cleage, P. "Lessons."

Rooks, B. "Precious Memories."

Cleage, P. "The Brass Bed." (FFT)

hooks, bell. *Bone Black*.

10/10--Readings from LN

10/17--Readings from DS

10/24--Bone Black

Facilitators:

Poetry:

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10/30-11/14 **CONTEMPORARY NARRATIVES OF VIOLATION, LOSS,
AND RESISTANCE**

Primary sources:

Hill, Anita. "Statement before the Senate Judiciary Committee." (FFT)

Jean, V. "Writing survival." (FFT)

Lorde, A. The transformation of silence into language and action. (FFT)

Life Notes. Parts Five and Six.

Weems, R. Hush, Mama's gotta go bye-bye. (DS)

Hollies, L. A daughter survives incest: a retrospective analysis. (DS)

10/30--Hill, Jean, Lorde, Weems, Hollies (DS) and *Life Notes*

11/7 Sapphire, *Push*

Bell-Scott, P. "Sapphire: The artist as witness." (FFT)

Sapphire will be speaking at a public roundtable and the class is invited to participate.

11/14 Sapphire will speak at a public roundtable on campus. The class is expected to attend and participate.

11/28

CONTEMPORARY NARRATIVES OF WORK AND LOVE

Primary sources:

Cleage, P. "My American history." (FFT)

Bell-Scott, P. "Barbara Smith: A home girl with a mission." (FFT)

hooks, b. "Writing autobiography." (FFT)

hooks, b. "Black women artist becoming." (LN)

Brown, E. "Mothers of Mind." (DS)

Dove, R. "The house that Jill built." (LN)

Life Notes, Part Four.

Facilitators:

Poetry:

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12/5

CONTEMPORARY NARRATIVES OF TRANSFORMATION AND EXPLORATION

Primary sources:

Life Notes , Parts seven and eight.

Additional material to be assigned.

Facilitators:

Poetry: