

Performance, Feminism and Social Change
AFR 311C (29999) | WGS 301 (44364)
Fall 2020
Online Course

Instructor:
Amanda "Semente" Caroline de Oliveira Pereira (they/she)
(AKA Professor P)
amandacaroline@utexas.edu

Office Hours: Fridays 12-2pm (or by appointment, email to schedule)
Zoom: Join URL: <https://utexas.zoom.us/j/98958296157>

Description/Objectives:

This course is an exploration of the ways that engaged performance and feminist practice generate space for social change. The course builds on the basic principle that social transformation requires individual awareness, and that awareness necessitates a rigorous examination of race, gender, class, and sexuality. Through ancestral research, community building, non-linear performance strategies and jazz aesthetics students will create solo and ensemble works that allow for an exploration of feminist thought. As a result of this course, students will develop tools for productive self-reflexivity, will understand the role of positionality in collaborating across identity markers, and acquire writing and performance skills that employ jazz sensibilities. A performance background is not required in order to excel in this course.

Format:

The assigned readings will provide a springboard for the creation of written and performance pieces. Class sessions will consist of prompt-based writing, analysis of readings, and physical exercises to encourage embodied explorations. Come to this work authentically and ready to engage with your whole self. *It is recommended that you designate a personal journal to document your explorations through this course.*

Required Texts:

Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. Patricia Hill Collins. Routledge, 2015.

Experiments in a Jazz Aesthetic. Omi Osun Joni L. Jones, et al. University of Texas Press, 2010.

for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf. Ntozake Shange. New York: Bantam Books, 1975.

Optional Texts:

This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color. Eds. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua. New York: Kitchen Table Women of Color Press, 1981.

Other readings will be posted to Canvas under "Files" + "Assignments" or linked in this syllabus.

Course Schedule

Ancestors/The Family/ The Self
Race/Gender/Sexuality/Class/Nation

Week 1

Wed 8/26

DO: [Chair Yoga with Semente](#)

READ: [No Place for Self-Pity, No Room for Fear](#)

DUE: Introductions Discussion Post

Fri 8/28

WATCH: [Dr. Omi Osun Joni L. Jones's Blackademics Talk: "Sista Docta"](#)

READ: "What Counts as Activism?"

READ: "Sexism: An American Disease in Blackface"

Week 2

Mon 8/31

DUE: Genealogy

READ: Excerpt from *Experiments in a Jazz Aesthetic*

Wed 9/2

READ: Excerpt from *Black Feminist Thought*

WATCH: [Kerry Washington and Anita Hill talk HBO's 'Confirmation' at Brandeis](#)

Fri 09/4

DUE: Ancestor Sketch

READ: Excerpt from *This Bridge Called My Back*

Week 3

Wed 9/9

READ: Excerpt from *Experiments in a Jazz Aesthetic*

READ: Excerpt from *Blacktino Queer Performance*

Fri 9/11

DUE: Virtual Museum Visit + Discussion Post

1. [Museum Options 1](#)

2. [Museum Options 2](#)

Week 4

Mon 9/14

READ: Excerpt from *Black Feminist Thought*

Wed 9/16

READ: Lorde, "Poetry is Not a Luxury"

Fri 9/18

DUE: My Ancestor/Myself Performance Text

Community/Collaboration/The We
Identity Groups/Affinity Groups/Work Groups

Week 5

Mon 9/21

READ: Excerpts from *Emergent Strategy*

Wed 9/23

READ: Excerpts from *This Bridge Called My Back*

READ: "Collectivity and Collaboration"

Fri 9/25

READ: "Rehearsing for the Revolution"

READ: "Queering the Jazz Aesthetic: An Interview with Sharon Bridgforth and Omi Osun Joni Jones"

RECEIVE: Company Assignments

DUE: My Ancestor/Myself Performance Video

Week 6

Mon 9/28

WATCH/EXPLORE: [River See](#)

READ: Susan Lori Parks, "New Black Math"

Wed 9/30

READ: [The Combahee River Collective Statement](#)

READ: Excerpt from *Experiments in a Jazz Aesthetic*

Fri 10/2

READ: *Theatrical Jazz*: "The Marrow: Laurie Carlos"

Week 7

Mon 10/5

WATCH/EXPLORE: [Cynthia Oliver Company: Works on Video](#)

DUE: Company Structure

Wed 10/7

READ: Excerpt from, *Single, Black, Female* by Dr. Lisa B. Thompson

WATCH: *Single, Black, Female* previews:

[Preview #1](#)

[Preview #2](#)

Fri 10/9

READ: *Theatrical Jazz*: "The Marrow: Laurie Carlos"

Week 8

Mon 10/12

DUE: Collaborative Promotion-Ad Text

Wed 10/14
READ: *Theatrical Jazz: The Roots*: Sharon Bridgforth

Fri 10/16
READ: Excerpts from *Black Feminist Thought*

Seriation/Polyphony/The Ensemble
Kinesis/Art-making/Jazz Aesthetics

Week 9

Mon 10/19
WATCH: [Underground by Lisa Thompson](#)

Wed 10/21
READ: Excerpt from, *Brazil, Mixture Or Massacre? Essays in the Genocide of a Black People*

Fri 10/23
DUE: Collaborative Promotion-Performance Video

Week 10

Mon 10/26
READ: *Theatrical Jazz: The Break / Awo / Process*
READ: *Theatrical Jazz: The Ensemble*

Wed 10/28
READ: *Theatrical Jazz: The Bridge / Ase / Transformation*

Fri 10/30
READ: *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*
DUE: Underground Reflection Paper

Week 11

Mon 11/2
READ: *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*

Wed 11/4
READ: *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*

Fri 11/6
READ/EXPLORE: [PEERS FOR PRIDE](#) Zine, Gender and Sexuality Center, UT

Week 12

Mon 11/9
READ: Excerpt from *Black Feminist Thought*

Wed 11/11
READ: ["Review: con flama"](#) + ["On the Bus The 'con flama' Experience"](#)

Fri 11/13
DO: Yoga + Meditation

Week 13

Mon 11/16
READ: [“Sour Grapes: The Art of Anger in America”](#)

Wed 11/18
READ: “The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism”
READ: “Ferguson Reminds Us of the Importance of a Global Context”

Fri 11/20
READ: Excerpt from *This Bridge Called My Back*
DUE: Ensemble Performance Text

Week 14:

INDIGENOUS REMEMBRANCE BREAK

Week 15:

11/30 - 12/4

DRESS REHEARSAL WEEK

12/7

LIVE Ensemble Performances!

This syllabus is subject to change by the instructor.

Assignments

Genealogy

You will research your family genealogy, focusing on the historical, political, and economic context of your oldest known ancestor. You will construct a family tree/diagram.

Ancestor Sketch

You will create a character sketch of your oldest known ancestor using as much detail as you can uncover from your research. You will submit the sketch along with three images.

My Ancestor/Myself Text + Performance

Your genealogy and ancestor sketch will serve as the foundation for a 1-2-minute poem, monologue, song, rant, or movement piece that you will create which places you in relationship to the ancestor you have researched. You will turn in the text to the instructor and submit a performance to the class of the work you have created giving attention to the politics of your aesthetic choices. The work must be memorized, and should use space, clothing, sound, props as appropriate.

Company Structure

Your company will create a document that describes your working relationship, how decisions will be made, how work will be distributed and how violations of the document—if any—will be handled. Each company member must have a copy of the document and each member should be prepared to discuss how the document reflects feminist principles.

Collaborative Promotion-Ad Text + Performance

Using the strategies of coalition building discussed in and demonstrated in class, you will work with your fellow students as a production company to create and present a 1-minute publicity piece for your final performance. Your publicity may be a snippet of your final performance, and should be devised to generate interest about your project. The content for this collaborative promotion performance can be drawn from the ancestral performances, and may include any new material the group creates. However, it must relate directly to the content of your final ensemble performance.

Reflection Paper

In 3-4 pages, you will respond to Lisa Thompson's *Underground*. Your paper should connect *Underground* to one feminist or performance concept covered in class. It should respond to the questions:

- What is the central theme in *Underground*?
- What kind of Black feminist intervention does *Underground* make?
- How does it illuminate the lives of Black women?
- How does its aesthetics and use of dramatic form relate with (or depart from) those covered in class?

Your paper should be proofread and well-argued. Draw on specific moments or elements from the performance to corroborate your claims.

Performance Texts

You are required to submit **two 1-2 page performance texts** during the semester. The first text will be based on your individual ancestor performance, and the second will be of your company ensemble performance.

These texts must be proofread, typed and double-spaced. The final performance text must be signed by each member of the company. These assignments are required and will factor into the performance grade.

Ensemble Performance

You and your company members will create a **10-minute ensemble performance** of your original writing, the readings discussed throughout the semester, your previous class performance, and any other material you need to create a cohesive production. The performance must demonstrate the feminist strategies of polyphony, non-linearity, multiple truths and non-hierarchical relationships along with Black feminist principles discussed in class, such as intersectionality.

3-day Essays

You will write **two pop essays** based on the course readings. You will have **3 days (72 hours)** to complete the essay. This assignment is designed to encourage you to focus on key ideas in the readings and in the course. **These essays must be 1 page minimum and are not to exceed 5 pages.**

Grading

You are expected to read all assignments closely, to participate actively in discussions and exercises, to collaborate generously and to be respectful of all members of the class. Learning how to offer constructive feedback and how to gracefully accept criticism will be an important component of the course. This class does use the +/- system.

Participation

Active and authentic participation in this class is essential to maintain a high level of discussion and allow you an opportunity to practice the collaborative feminist and performance principles that undergird the course. You should try to contribute to all discussions with thoughtful comments. Be fully present, even from a distance. Work to listen well and to respond

graciously and generously to (which, of course, doesn't mean necessarily agreeing with) other students' ideas. We will abide by the Rules for Respect that we create at the beginning of the course.

Attendance Policy

*You are expected to attend office hours (Fridays 12-2pm) or schedule to meet with the instructor **at least once in the semester**. You are also expected to engage with all videos and posts in a timely manner in order to keep up with course expectations.*

Pop essays may only be made up in the event of an emergency (documented illness, a passing in the family, etc.) or pre-arranged absences (religious holidays, athletic events, conferences, weddings, etc.).

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence (see 24/7 Rule).

Grading Scale

<i>My Ancestor/ My Self Text 10 pts.</i>	<i>Due: September 18, 2020</i>
<i>My Ancestor/My Self Performance Video 10 pts.</i>	<i>Due: September 25, 2020</i>
<i>Collaborative Promotion-Ad Text 10 pts.</i>	<i>Due: October 12, 2020</i>
<i>Collaborative Promotion-Ad Performance 15 pts.</i>	<i>Due: October 23, 2020</i>
<i>Underground Reflection Paper 10 pts.</i>	<i>Due: October 30, 2020</i>
<i>Ensemble Performance Text 5 pts.</i>	<i>Due: November 20, 2020</i>
<i>LIVE Ensemble Performance 20 pts.</i>	<i>Due: December 7, 2020</i>
<i>3-day Pop Essays (2@ 2.5pt. each) 5 pts.</i>	<i>TBD</i>

Participation 5 pts.

Discussion Posts (1pt per post) 10 pts.

TOTAL 100 pts.

Course Policies and University of Texas Policies UT'S HONOR CODE and ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The core values of the University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

We assume that all work is your own. You **MUST** give appropriate credit when it is due and use proper citation form for all materials (MLA or Chicago style are acceptable). Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. For more information about plagiarism visit <http://plagiarism.org>. Basically: Cheating has serious consequences. If you need help with writing, visit the Undergraduate Writing Center (in FAC 211) <http://uwc.utexas.edu>.

Late work will only be accepted for excused, verified, *documented* absences. Late assignments (only in cases of excused absences) must be turned in within a week of your return to school.

Grades

Grades will be posted on Canvas in a timely manner, so you can easily keep track of your progress in this course. To get to Canvas, go to <http://canvas.com>. Log in using your EID and password and locate this course by its title and unique number.

Documented Disability Statement

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone).

Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, you are responsible for reading your email for university and course-related information and announcements. You are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to your email address. You can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating your e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>. You should also check Canvas regularly as some course readings and announcements will be posted there.

Email Correspondence

When emailing the instructor, include the relevant course code (AFR311C or WGS301) in the subject line. Include your name and UT EID in the body of your email. Before contacting me, look for information in the syllabus/on Canvas. I will post important information and announcements for you, but ask that you respect my time by not submitting redundant requests to me. If the info you seek is not online/in the syllabus, see me before/after class, during office hours, or send an email. Lastly, practice good email etiquette. Allow for a 48-hour response time during the week. Know that we may not respond to emails on weekends.

Feedback

During this course I will be asking you to give me feedback on your learning in informal as well as formal ways, including through anonymous surveys about how my teaching strategies are helping or hindering your learning.

It's very important for me to know your reaction to what we're doing in class, so I encourage you to respond to these surveys, ensuring that together we can create an environment effective for teaching and learning.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Emergency Evacuation Policy

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building.

The nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.

If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class.

In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of class instructors.

Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

