

AFAM 390-DL2 / WMST 300 DL1
COURAGEOUS VOICES OF BLACK WOMEN (Fall 2021)
Meeting Times: Tuesday/Thursday 12-1:15pm (via Zoom)

Instructor: Ayondela McDole

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Office: Room 239E, Johnson Center

Office Hours: available by appointment anytime (Virtual Only)

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course is a contemporary examination of how and why Black women use their voices in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The course is a literary exposition of Black women writers centered on honoring the works of Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison. Themes of agency, power, loss, violence, silence and independence will be extensively examined while constructions of family, race and society will be challenged. This course will use the semester to highlight the politics of voice and its role in contemporary society. The course is a reflection on how Black women writers retain, recover and regain their voices.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to address the importance and politics of agency for Black women in American society.
- Students will be able to demonstrate a critical approach to the material nature of agency in society.
- Students will gain an understanding of Black women's contribution to the Black literature canon.
- Students will be able to identify and explain the following literary terms: motif, simile, metaphor, arc of plot, imagery and character development.

Required Course Materials

Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Bantam, 1997.

Morrison, Toni. *God Help the Child*. Random House, 2016.

Naylor, Gloria. *The Women of Brewster Place*. Penguin, 2005.

Assignment Descriptions:

Attendance (10 points or 10% of your grade)

This class will be conducted through synchronous instruction solely meeting on Thursdays (12pm-1:15pm). Your attendance is pivotal to your success in this class and will directly contribute to your participation points.

Participation (40 points/40% of your grade)

Your participation points are earned through posting to the weekly discussion threads on Blackboard and being engaged in class on Thursdays. Attendance, participation and completing the readings= key to success in this class.

Short Paper (25 points/ 25% of your grade)

You will be required to write one paper (3-4 pages maximum double spaced) that answers one of the prompts provided by the professor. Students are expected to sign up for novel to write on. Due dates for each novel will be provided. You are expected include the key terms introduced in class thus far at the time the paper is due and show an adequate demonstration that you have read. A critical eye is key to doing well in this assignment. The paper is due the Tuesday of the week of your presentation.

Presentations: (25 points each / 25% of your grade each)

You are expected to give one presentation on the short paper you submitted. Each student will have 10 minutes to present on their analysis outlined in the short paper. All presentations will be conducted on a designated Thursday class.

Grading Expectations

Evaluation and Assignments:

This course will be evaluated out of 100 points as shown by the list of assignments and following table:

Points	Letter Grade		Points	Letter Grade
97-100+	A+			
93-96	A		C	73-76
90-92	A-		C-	70-72
87-89	B+		D+	67-69
83-86	B		D	63-66
80-82	B-		D-	60-62
77-79	C+		F	Below 60

This rubric will be used to grade all assignments.

<p>A(+/1) indicates excellent performance with clear evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a comprehensive knowledge of the 	<p>B(+/-) indicates good performance with evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a substantial knowledge of the subject
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<p>subject matter and principles treated in the course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a high degree of originality and independence of thought ● a superior ability to organize and analyze ideas ● an outstanding ability to communicate these ideas (orally or through composition) 	<p>matter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a moderate degree of originality and independence of thought ● a good ability organize and analyze ideas ● an ability to communicate or compose clearly
<p>C(+/-) indicates satisfactory performance with evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● an acceptable grasp of the subject matter ● an acceptable ability to organize and analyze ideas ● an ability to communicate or compose adequately 	<p>D indicates minimally acceptable performance with evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● rudimentary knowledge of the subject matter ● some evidence that organizational and analytical skills have been developed, but with significant weaknesses in some areas ● significant weakness in the ability to compose or communicate ideas
<p>F indicates failing performance with evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● an inadequate knowledge of the subject matter ● failure to complete required work, and an inability to organize, compose, or communicate ideas. 	

Grading Rubric

CATEGORY	Exceeds the Standard (A+/B+)	Meets the Standard (B-/C-)	Does Not Meet the Standard (D+/F)
Purpose & Supporting Details	The paper has a clear purpose and supporting details. The paper shows thought and attention to the content presented in the paper. The paper is clear and connected to the class.	The paper has a purpose and supporting details but they may be lacking some clarity. The paper shows some thought and attention to the content presented in the paper.	The paper is missing purpose and supporting details. The paper is a mere restatement of content without expressing ideas.

Addressing assignment prompts	The paper thoroughly addresses all assignment prompts clearly and is well articulated.	The paper attempts to address all assignment prompts but is missing major details or does not articulate clear and coherent answers.	The paper misses one or more of the discussion prompts and does not have complete details.
Connection to class	Paper clearly connects to class themes or ideas including intersectionality, feminism, patriarchy, representations of women in society, colorism, identity, etc.	Paper attempts to connect to class themes or ideas including intersectionality, feminism, patriarchy, representations of women in society, colorism, identity, etc. or infers connection.	Paper is missing clear connection to class themes or ideas including intersectionality, feminism, patriarchy, representations of women in society, colorism, identity, etc.
Global Perspective	This paper directly connects back to global perspectives on women.	This paper attempts to connect to a global perspective, but needs development or more details.	This paper does not connect to a global perspective.
Grammar & Spelling (Conventions)	Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling.	Writer makes 2-3 errors in grammar or spelling that distract.	Writer makes several errors in grammar or spelling.
Length	Paper meets assignment length..	Paper is close to assignment length. (subtract points)	Paper is not close to assignment length. (subtract points)

Course Calendar Fall 2021

Week 1: Welcome!

8/24 – Introductions

8/26 -Private meditation – **NO CLASS**

Week 2: *The Women of Brewster Place*

8/31 – Pages (10-52) due today and post to discussion board!

9/2- See you in class.

Week 3: *The Women of Brewster Place*

9/7 Pages (53-113) due today and post to discussion board!

9/9 See you in class.

Week 4: *The Women of Brewster Place*

9/14 Pages (113-162) due today and post to discussion board!

9/16 **Presentations** / See you in class.

Week 5: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

9/21 Pages (5-48) due today and post to discussion board!

9/23 See you in class.

Week 6: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

9/28 Pages (49-92) due today and post to discussion board!

9/30 See you in class.

Week 7: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

10/5 Pages (93-146) due today and post to discussion board!

10/7 See you in class.

Week 8: Fall Break

10/12 **NO CLASS**

10/14 **NO CLASS**

Week 9: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

10/19 Pages (147-193) due today and post to discussion board!

10/21 See you in class.

Week 10: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

10/26 Pages (194-241) due today and post to discussion board!

10/28 **Presentations** / See you in class.

Week 11: *God Help the Child*

11/2 Pages (1-57) due today and post to discussion board!

11/4 See you in class.

Week 12: *God Help the Child*

11/9 Pages (58-106) due today and post to discussion board!

11/11 See you in class.

Week 13: *God Help the Child*

11/16 Pages (107-140) due today and post to discussion board!

11/18 See you in class.

Week 14: Thanksgiving Break

11/23 **NO CLASS**

11/25 **NO CLASS**

Week 15: *God Help the Child*

11/30 Pages (141-178) due today and post to discussion board!

12/2 **Presentations** / See you in class.

COURSE POLICIES & INFORMATION

Course Structure:

This is an online class and so a strong online presence is crucial to success of this class. Just as with in person learning respect of your fellow classmates and of the professor is expected. I also expect students to come to the class having read the assigned readings and to be ready to discuss. My advice to students taking this course is to come up with a plan on how you will stay connected to the readings as there are many. Additionally, we are covering dynamic and highly interpersonal topics in this course. Some of the materials may be emotional or personal for students. I encourage everyone to maintain respect in our discussions and to do what they can to help to maintain a safe environment for the course. If you are having difficulties with the sensitive nature of the content in the course, I encourage you that reach out to some of the many resources on campus and/or talk to your instructor.

Course Ground Rules

Because this course touches on so many intersections and interpersonal identities and is discussion based, it will be essential to create a safe space to grow and explore ideas together. In a class of 40+ people, that can be difficult to set-up and therefore ground rules may be reexamined at several points in the semester. I encourage students to check-in with the instructor if they see an issue. In general, the ground rules will be as follows:

- Allow respect to be central to every discussion we have.
- You do not have to agree with every point in the class or others in the class. It is healthy and important to disagree and to debate ideas. Keep the conversation respectful and the disagreement to aspects of an argument or a piece of course material, not to people in the room or groups of people.

- If you are someone that seldom speaks up in class, challenge yourself to do so when you can.
- As the instructor, I hold a lot of the power in the room and I have to acknowledge that power as power (and lack thereof) is central to many of our discussions. I will do my best to allow the conversation to life up the voices of others. I hope you do the same if it is safe for you to do so.

Policy for Late and Missing Assignments:

You are responsible for completing assignments on time. Due dates are clearly indicated throughout the syllabus. I do not accept late assignments unless previous arrangements have been made. This means that if you anticipate not being able to complete your assignment on time whether it is due to a documented excuse or an unfortunate conflict, you must communicate with me before the assignment is due. I want all of my students to be successful in this course.

Email Policy:

In compliance with a University-wide initiative, our correspondence will be only through GMU assigned email accounts. Please check your email account regularly for updates and important announcements. I will not accept excused based on not checking your email.

Accommodations

I want every student to have success in this course. I will honor all available disability accommodations from the point the notice is shared with me (not retroactive). I recommend being proactive when working out accommodations. If you have questions, don't hesitate to ask. If you have questions about registering for a disability based accommodation, please reach out to the Office of Disability Services. (<https://ds.gmu.edu>)

Extra Credit

Extra credit is not guaranteed in this course. Your main priority should be to complete the required coursework. If a bonus opportunity is available, I will share it with you as soon as I am able to do so.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATION

Format for Assignments:

All assignments except for in-class activities must be typed, double spaced using 12 point font along with the required number of words indicated on the assignment guideline documents. Papers must be documented properly according either MLA, APA or Chicago style. Assignments will be submitted to Blackboard (indicated on the assignment guideline documents). Unless specifically requested, no assignments will be accepted by email. Keep a copy of all assignments. Failure to follow assignment guidelines may result in a grade deduction. Attempting to change the margins to fit less words, adding white periods, etc. will result in a reduction of your grade on the assignment by 50% and could violate our University Mason

Honor Code. Any instances could result in potential referral to the office for Academic Integrity. Make sure you have paper and a pen/pencil for every class - in-class activities require that you use your own materials unless the instructor provides them. Assignments are typically due at midnight of their due date. Keep in mind that the University IT support is not available at that time and therefore being proactive is recommended in case you run into any difficulties.

Academic Honesty & Collaboration:

The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously in this class. George Mason University has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity: 1) all work submitted must be your own; 2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations (for a full description of George Mason's Honor Code, please see: <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/>).

While collaboration and learning from others, especially established scholars in the field is not only encouraged but required, using someone else's words or ideas without giving them credit is plagiarism. If you quote directly from any text, you **MUST** use the exact words (including punctuation) just as the words, phrases, and sentences appear in the original text. You must also follow proper citation rules to indicate that you are quoting directly from a text. If you paraphrase ideas, that is, convey the author's ideas in your own words, you must still cite the source, using an established citation format. When in doubt about citation rules or assignment guidelines, ask me for clarification. A great online resource for resources on writing and citation is the Purdue Online Writing Lab: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

African and African American Studies seeks to create a learning environment that fosters respect for people across identities. We welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and ability. We encourage all members of the learning environment to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

***Please take advantage of these wonderful resources available to you.**

GMU Writing Center

The University Writing Center provides free tutorial sessions for all students needing help with any writing project. It is best to make an appointment, but walk-ins are accepted if there are openings at that time. Assistance is also offered online. The GMU Writing Center has several locations on campus. For more information see: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

Office of Disability Services

Any student with documented learning disabilities or other conditions that may affect academic performance should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Services (SUB I, Suite 2500; 993-2474; <http://www.gmu.edu/depts/unilife/ods/>) to determine the accommodations you might need; and 2) talk with us to discuss reasonable accommodations.

Counseling and Psychology Services

Student Union 1 (SUB 1), Rm. 3129
703-993-2380 <http://caps.gmu.edu>

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning (LGBTQ Resources)

Student Union 1 (SUB I), Rm 2200
703-993-2702 www.lgbtq.gmu.edu

Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education (ODIME)

SUB 1, Suite 2400; 993-2700; <http://odime.gmu.edu/>

Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC)

<http://ssac.gmu.edu/>

SSAC offer students one-on-one support, interactive programming and on and off campus resources. Some of the topic areas we address are healthy relationships, stress management, nutrition, sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, stalking, drug and alcohol use and sexual health.

Star-Multimedia Computer Lab

Johnson Center, 229
703-993-8990; http://doit.gmu.edu/studentSection.asp?page=multimedia_lab

Women and Gender Studies at George Mason University

The Women and Gender Studies program offers an interdisciplinary minor to undergraduate students. This is a 21-credit minor that works well with most majors and can be structured to fit your interests. “Representations of Women” provides a good overview of the topics studied. Feminist scholarship has influenced many disciplines and the minor provides students with the tools necessary to engage with issues of gender, race, sexuality and class in various texts and contexts.

The Women and Gender Studies Center is located in the Johnson Center, Room 240K. The Women and Gender Studies Center organizes a variety of lectures, workshops, and other activities relevant to campus life throughout the academic year. They also have a collection of over 1000 books relevant to Gender Studies, which students may check out with their George

Mason ID card. You can learn more about the Women and Gender Studies Minor and the Resource Center at: www.wmst.gmu.edu

We also offer free printing to all of our enrolled students, majors, and minors.

Location: 240K Johnson Center

Sexual Misconduct and Interpersonal Violence

George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination, and we are committed to a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students who believe that they have been sexually harassed, assaulted or subjected to sexual misconduct to seek assistance and support. [University Policy 1202 Sexual Harassment and Misconduct](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/) (<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/>) speaks to the specifics of our process, our resources, and the options available to you.

Confidential student resources are available on campus at the Student Support and Advocacy Center (<http://ssac.gmu.edu/>), Counseling and Psychological Services (<http://caps.gmu.edu/>), and Student Health Services (<http://shs.gmu.edu/>).

All other members of the University community (including faculty, except those noted above) are **not** considered confidential resources and are **required** to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator. For a full list of resources, support opportunities, and reporting options, contact Dr. Jennifer Hammat, Title IX Coordinator, at <http://diversity.gmu.edu/title-ix>, at 703-993-8730, or in the Compliance, Diversity, and Ethics office in the Aquia Building, Suite 373.

A note: Your instructor is a confidential resource when working for the Student Support and Advocacy Center. However, as a faculty member, your instructor is required to follow all University policies on mandated reporting. If you would like to seek confidential support around interpersonal violence, please contact the Student Support and Advocacy Center at 703-993-3686.