African American history is a very important component of America's past, and black women--like their black male counterparts, white males, white females, Indians, and immigrants--played major roles in every phase of the country's development. HIST 6398 is designed to emphasize black women's input in American history. Like white women, black women struggled for suffrage, economic equality, and social acceptance. Although politics and economics factor strongly in the course content, students will also learn about other concerns and activities of black women. Just as African American history and American history are indispensably intertwined, the same holds true for women's history, black and white. This will be evident in HIST 6398.

Graduate students who enroll in this course must have a basic acquaintance with general American history. They will attend all classes designed for the undergraduate component of this subject (HIST 3326) and additionally read 8 additional books on the subject—taken from the Guide to Further Reading section of this syllabus.

**Learning Outcomes:**
- Students will attain, through lectures, discussion and reading, and demonstrate, through exams and papers, knowledge about the historical significance of African American women to the development of North America.
- Class discussions of primary sources and secondary works of history will help students to read and to think critically.
- Writing assignments will enable students to improve their writing skills.
- Graduate students in this independent study will have extensive knowledge about the history and historiographical debates relating to black women's history.

**Required Texts**
Darlene Clark Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reed, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible": A Reader in Black Women's History (New York, 1995).
Deborah Gray White, Ar'n't I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South (New York,1985, 1999).
Ann Moody, Coming of Age in Mississippi (New York, 1968).
Melba Beals, Warriors Don’t Cry (New York: Pocket Book, 1994).

**Book Review Options**
Annette Gordon-Reed, Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy (Charlottesville, VA, 1997).

**Excellent Reference Sources for Each Week**


**Week 1:** August 22: I. *"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible,"* General Theoretical Essays, pp. 3-54; Celia: *A Slave*

**Week 2:** August 29: II. Africa, *"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible"* pp. 57-75
IV. United States--Eighteenth Century, pp. 189-234

**Week 3:** September 5: Africa, *"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible"* pp. 77-123

**Week 4:** September 12: III. Caribbean and Canada, *"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible"* pp. 127-46

**Week 5:** September 19: Caribbean and Canada, *"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible"* pp. 147-85

**Week 6:** September 26 **First Exam**

**Week 7:** October 3: V. United States--Nineteenth Century, *"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible"* pp. 237-302
Slavery: 1800-1860 *Ar’n't I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*

**Week 8:** October 10: United States--Nineteenth Century, *"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible"* pp. 303-41; *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*
Slavery to Freedom: Civil War, Emancipation, Reconstruction, Agricultural Workers, The New South, Segregation (1860-1900)

Week 9: October 17: United States--Nineteenth Century, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible" pp. 343-404; Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900

Week 10: October 24: VI. United States--Twentieth Century, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible" pp. 407-85

Countryside to City: Urbanization/World War I (1910-1920)

Week 11: October 31: United States--Twentieth Century, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible" pp. 487-520

Second Exam: Thursday, November 2

Week 12: November 7: United States--Twentieth Century, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible" pp. 521-41

Week 13: November 14: United States--Twentieth Century, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible" pp. 543-60

Week 14: November 21: United States--Twentieth Century, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible" pp. 561-77; Moody, Coming of Age in Mississippi


Week 15: November 28 – Book review due at class time.

African American Women in the Most Recent Years, 1960-2002

Black Women & the Film Industry

Dash, Daughters of the Dust

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, December 14th, 11:00 - 2:00 p.m. 7-AH

Final grade will consist of the average from three exams, including a comprehensive final, and one book review. Three unannounced quizzes worth a total of 9 points (3 points each) will be given during the semester, and these points will be averaged into the total exam points in determining the final letter grade. Only students with a written university or medical excuse will be allowed to make up an exam, which is scheduled for the first reading day before the final exam period. Class attendance is very important.

Scholastic Dishonesty: A university degree depends upon the integrity of the work done by each student. Scholastic dishonesty includes: cheating, plagiarism, and related activities. Such dishonesty is a serious issue and can result in a person being dismissed from the university. This instructor will hold students accountable and will rely on policy and procedures as stated in the student handbook in reckoning with students exhibiting academic dishonesty. If you have any questions about scholastic dishonesty, it is your
responsibility to consult the official student handbook for the policy at UH. I will make
time to address issues and questions on this if requested.

Prohibition of the Use of Sexist and Racist Language: As a rule, we will refrain from
using sexist, racist, and/or exclusionary language in this course. Please make every effort
to be sensitive to the politics of language and its implications for others. The instructor is
available to assist students in this area as needed and requested.

Guide for Book Review

The following questions/suggestions will help you to organize your thoughts as you
prepare for the written exercise on the book reviews.

1. Be sure to read the front matter.

2. Who is the author? What do you know about her?

3. What is the purpose of this book? Is it clearly defined in the presentation of the
material? How well does the author substantiate her argument?

4. What is the scope of the book? What period of time does it cover? Does it cover
social, economic, political, and/or intellectual history?

5. Which sections of the book are especially well or poorly done?

6. What kinds of sources did the author use? How valid is the study?

7. Give attention to names and concepts or organizations. In other words, you must be
able to support generalizations with more than one specific example.

8. Certainly you will not be expected to remember the names of all persons and
organizations with whom African American women interacted, but you should be able to
identify those who had the greatest impact upon them and why (as regards the book
selected to review and related class material).

9. Were black women successful? How can they be compared with their
contemporaries? Explain.

10. Compare the treatment of the subject in your selected book for review with the
coverage of the same subject in any required reading for HIST 3326. Do they differ?
Explain. While other authors (required readings) may not cover the topic discussed in
your selected book, assess their coverage of African American professional women and
working-class people in general.


Your mission, then, is to provide a short review (3 typed, double-spaced pages only)
summarizing the scope, purpose, and content of the book and its significance on the
subject. Be sure to include also an evaluation of the author's success in achieving her
purpose, use of sources, and organization and presentation of the material. Critical
analysis is very important.
Guide to Further Reading


Betina Aptheker, Woman's Legacy: Essays on Race, Sex, and Class in American History (Amherst, 1982).


Sarah and A. Elizabeth Delany with Amy Hill Hearth, Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years (New York, 1993).


Carolivia Herron, Nappy Hair (New York, 1997).


Wilma King, Stolen Childhood: Youth in Nineteenth-Century America (Bloomington, 1995).


Micheline R. Malson, Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi, Jean F. O'Barr, and Mary Wyer, Black Women in America: Social Science Perspectives (Chicago, 1988).


Marilyn Richardson, ed., Maria W. Stewart, America's First Black Woman Political Writer: Essays and Speeches (Bloomington, 1987).


*Jacqueline Anne Rouse, Lugenia Burns Hope: Black Southern Reformer (Athens, Georgia, 1989).

*Stephanie J. Shaw, What a Woman Ought to Be and To Do: Black Professional Women Workers during the Jim Crow Era (Chicago, 1996).

Cheryl A. Wall, Women of the Harlem Renaissance (Bloomington, 1995).

Sheyann Webb and Rachel West Nelson, Selma, Lord, Selma: Girlhood Memories of the Civil Rights Days (University, Ala., 1980).

Deborah Gray White, Ar'n't I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South (New York, 1985).


Harriet E. Wilson, Our Nig: or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black, in a Two-story White House, North, introduction and notes by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York, 1983 [1st. published 1859]).

*Graduate students will read and discuss the books marked with an asterisk as well as complete the assignments along with the undergraduate students.