

**WESTERN UNIVERSITY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND WOMEN'S STUDIES**  
**GSWS 3420F/G: Black Intellectual Traditions**  
**Winter 2026**

**Instructor:** Dr. Jameelah Morris

**Class Time:** Tuesdays, 1:30-4:30pm

**Location:** TC-341

**Office:** Lawson Hall, 3233

**Email:** jmor337@uwo.ca

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 2-4pm (or by appointment via zoom)

*The department would like to recognize that we are located on the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawandaron peoples.*

**Course Description:**

*“[O]ur ancestors did not wade through rivers of blood so that we might surrender the interpretation of their lives in the hands of others. ”*  
-Vincent Harding, *The Vocation of the Black Scholar and the Struggles of the Black Community*, 1974

How do intellectuals craft visions of freedom from the margins of empire? What role do Black writers, artists, political prisoners, and activists play in shaping the world around us?

Taken as our guiding questions, this course explores Black intellectual traditions through the dynamic relationship between theory and practice in Black Internationalism, Black Feminist Thought, Black Radicalism, and the Black Arts Movement. We will examine how Black writers, artists, political prisoners, and cultural workers have approached the project (and meanings) of freedom and liberation in Canada, the US, Latin America and the Caribbean, paying particular attention to how Black feminist and queer thinkers reimagine intimacy, kinship, and political resistance beyond normative frameworks. Each week, we put scholars, artists, and activists into conversation across time and place in order to examine their interventions into inequality, historical time, objectivity, respectability, solidarity, and empire. Course materials span poetry, film, music, memoir, political theory, and historical material.

**Course Outcomes:**

- develop a critical understanding of Black intellectual traditions as they relate to questions of race, gender, sexuality, and empire
- acquire a thorough understanding of how Black feminist, queer, and radical thinkers challenge dominant conceptions of power, resistance, and liberation
- analyze the relationship between theory and practice

- become familiar with the political, historical, and cultural contexts in which Black writers, artists, and activists produce knowledge from the mid 20th century onwards
- investigate how forms of cultural production (e.g. literature, music, film, visual art) articulate visions of freedom, justice, and collective world-making
- assess the limitations and possibilities of intellectual and artistic production as forms of political resistance
- reflect on their own positionality in relation to the course themes, texts, and modes of expression

### **Learning Outcomes:**

- skills in critical reading, writing, and analysis
- the ability to interpret and engage with a range of multimodal texts including visual, sonic, and literary forms
- oral communication and collaborative discussion skills
- research skills grounded in feminist and anti-colonial methodologies
- the ability to translate theoretical insights into creative, praxis-based assignments with public relevance
- a deeper understanding of how Black intellectual traditions inform contemporary movements for racial, gender, and sexual justice

### **Pre-Requisites:**

GSWS 2230F/G or GSWS 2231F/G or permission of the department.

### **Required Texts:**

Students are not required to purchase any texts for this course. All readings will be available on Western's Course Readings platform.

### **Evaluation:**

- **Critical Analysis Papers: (30%)**  
**Two Papers (15% each) Due on February 3rd and March 3rd**

You will write **two 1000-1500 word essays** that critically engage key course themes. Each paper should analyze at least two course texts, moving beyond summary to evaluate the authors' arguments, draw connections across readings, and apply key concepts to a broader political, historical, or contemporary context. Strong papers will demonstrate original thinking, reflect an understanding of referenced materials, and develop an argument.

- **Project Proposal and Annotated Bibliography: 10%**  
**Due on March 17<sup>th</sup>**

This assignment prepares you for the final Project. You will submit a 200-250 word proposal of your Praxis Project idea as well as an annotated bibliography of sources you

will use for the project. Time will be dedicated during class on March 17<sup>th</sup> to discuss and begin to workshop these ideas (especially the multimodal component).

- **Praxis Project: 30%**

*Due on April 7*

The final project draws on the course's central focus: the relationship between Black intellectualism and praxis. You will develop a public-facing, teachable resource that engages course themes. It must include:

- A multimodal component (e.g. zine, podcast, visual essay, short video, etc.)
- A 1500-2000 word written analysis that clearly articulates your project's purpose, methodology, and audience. This analysis must engage closely with at least three course texts and include original research, with proper citations.
- A clear demonstration of how your project draws from themes and interventions we've studied in class.

- **In-Class Presentation: 20%**

*Scheduled throughout the semester*

Each student will give a 10-12 minute presentation on a selected week's topic. Your job is to help frame the conversation by drawing out key ideas, posing questions, and making connections across texts. To open discussion, you are also asked to research and share one additional brief reading/visual material that is relevant with the class.

- **Attendance and Participation: 10%**

This course is rooted in collaborative learning. You're expected to come prepared, having completed the readings, and to participate actively in both full-class and small-group discussions.

**Course Website:**

All course information, including assignments, will be posted on the course website. Go to <https://owl.uwo.ca/portal>.