Exploring African Canadian Women’s History: 1700-1900

Description of the Course
This course will examine how an interplay of gender, class, region, sexuality, religion, and race shaped the historical experiences of Black women in Canada. A chronological framework will act as a signpost, but in addition, the course will also be organized according to themes. Some themes and topics which will be explored are Eighteenth-century conflict and change, culture, the Underground Railroad, women and the development of the Black press, slavery, resistance, and freedom, gendering the African diaspora, labour and migration, immigration, work, gender roles and conventions, consciousness, community building, and civil rights.

This proposed course on African Canadian women’s history will be anchored within the broader, comparative framework of Canadian women’s history, and taught from a feminist perspective. Further, it will place Canada within the broader context of the African Diaspora. We will also examine Canada’s insertion and role in the world capitalist economy and how this phenomenon affected Black women overtime as historical actors. Though this course is a history course, I will approach it from an interdisciplinary perspective, and so in addition to history texts, I will bring readings and audiovisual content from religious studies, literature, sociology, political economy, and from other areas in the humanities and social sciences.

The course will be organized around weekly lectures and tutorials. Students are expected to read the weekly assignments and come to class ready to participate. Films, videos, and other AV formats that are directly connected to the lecture/tutorial will be viewed.

Note that this outline is subject to change.

Required Texts
Peggy Bristow, We’re Rooted Here and They Can’t Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian Women’s History (University of Toronto Press, 1999).
Njoki Wane, Back to the Drawing Board: African-Canadian Feminisms (Sumach Press, 2002)
Afua Cooper, The Hanging of Angelique (HarperCollins, 2006)
A course reader will also be available for sale. Please note that the reader is also a required text.

Recommended
Robin Winks, The Blacks in Canada (McGill-Queen’s UP, 1007, reprint)
Constance Backhouse, Colour-Coded: A Legal history of Racism in Canada (UTP, 1996)
Black Canadian Women’s History  
Dr. Cooper

Darlene Clark Hine, *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: A Reader in Black Women’s History* (Carlson, 1995)  
Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (any edition)  

Assignments and grading

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historiographical Essay</td>
<td>20% (historiography; research methods; review of literature).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quiz (who/what/where/when/concepts)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take Home Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>30% (archival work, using primary source material; or family history (using oral interviews); suggestions from students).</td>
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T=tutorial  
STL=short-term loan

It is required that students cover all the weekly readings and contribute to class discussion.

Seminar Outline and Schedule: Readings are drawn from reader and other sources

**Class 1: Introduction**  
**Theorizing African Canadian Women’s History**  

**Class 2: Slavery: The Black Triangle and the Gendering of an African Diaspora**  
Hill, *Book of Negroes*  
*T Afua* Cooper, “Atlantic Origins,” *Hanging of Angelique*  
Video clip from *Amistad*

**Class 3: Women, Slavery in Canada, and the Atlantic World System**

Class 4: Enslaved Women and Resistance
Elgersman, Unyielding Spirits, 101-132

Class 5: Overlapping Diasporas: The Black Loyalists, the Maroons, and Refugees of the War of 1812
Film: Hymn to Freedom: Nova Scotia
Hamilton, “Naming Names, Naming Ourselves,” in Bristow We’re Rooted Here
John Grant, The Maroon in Nova Scotia (Formax, Halifax, 2002)
Hill, Book of Negroes

Class 6: Completing the Circle: The Exodus of the Loyalists and Maroon to Sierra Leone, West Africa
Grant, Maroons, 133-158,
Hill, Book of Negroes
James Walker, The Black Loyalists (Toronto, 1992) 115-164,
T. Video Clip from Seeking Salvation: History of the Black Church in Canada

Class 7: Women on the Underground Railroad: Myths and Realities
T. Video: “The Underground Railroad.”

Class 8: Black Women and the Founding of the Black Press

“Mary E. Bibb to Gerritt Smith,” BAP 108-109
Shirley Yee, Black Women Abolitionists (Tennessee, 1992) STL
Jane Rhodes, Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the 19th Century
Excerpts from the Black Abolitionist Papers, Vol. 2

Class 9: Work: Teaching and Education
“Coloured People of Hamilton” Black Abolitionist Papers, Vol. 2, 97-98
Afua Cooper, “Black Women and Work in Nineteenth-Century Canada West: Black Woman Teacher Mary Bibb” in We’re Rooted Here 143-170
Various letters, to be provided by lecturer, from Black women teachers to the American Missionary Association (AMA Archives, Fisk University)

Class 10: Work, cont..
Film: “Older, Stronger, Wiser,” an NFB production
T Various narratives from Silvera’s, Silenced
Canadian advertisements regarding female slaves (taken from various sources)

Class 11: Abundant Faith: Black Women Pioneers in Western Canada
Philip Foner, “Colored Inhabitants of Vancouver Island,” in BC Studies (winter 170-71) 29-33
Black Abolitionist Papers’ readings on Black Migration to Western Canada

Class 12: Building Communities
Shirley Yee, “Gender Ideology and Black Women as Community-Builders in Ontario, 1850-1870,” Canadian Historical Review 75, 1 (1994) 53-73
Peggy Bristow, “Black Women in Buxton and Chatham,” in We’re Rooted Here 69-142.
Edmunds-Flett, “Abundant Faith,” 19th-Century African Canadian Women on Vancouver Island,”
T. Film: Hymn to Freedom, Part 4—The Canadian West

Class 13: Wrap-up.