Black in Colonial America: Three Women
Sarah Jessica Johnson, PhD
ENG 21785; GNSE 21725; CRES 21785

Spring 2019
T/Th 12:30am-1:50pm
80 min/session; 2 sessions/week

Syllabus & Guidelines

Through a survey of texts by and about Sally Hemings, Phillis Wheatley and Tituba, “the Indian,” we will consider the lives of three black women in colonial America. In this period of expansion and contraction of the concepts of race and bondage, what kind of “tellings” were possible for these women? By reading texts written as early as 1692 and as late as 2008, we will also consider how representations of these women have changed over time. Simplified by history as a witch, a poet and a mistress, the details of the lives of Tituba, Phillis and Sally resists these epithets. This course will ask why and how they remain present in the written record today, and what this teaches us about the formation of literary and historical canons.

Book list:
Morrison, Toni: A Mercy
Condé, Maryse: I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem
Wheatley, Phyllis: Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral
Gordon-Reed, Anette: The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family
Winter, Jonah and Terry Widener: My Name is James Madison Hemings
(C) denotes texts available on Canvas

Participation:
For this class to be a lively and productive group conversation, all students must join in. I understand that not everyone is comfortable with verbal participation in a classroom setting. If you are one of these people, come to my office hours to discuss how we can incorporate your ideas into section. If the concern is with public speaking, I have tricks! Come see me. Comments will be evaluated based on their quality rather than quantity, so work towards thoughtful critical participation. Attendance is part of your participation grade. Only two unexcused absences are allowed per quarter. If you know in advance that you will need to miss a class, inform me within the first two weeks so that you may be excused. Please be on time! Repeated tardiness will affect your participation grade; more importantly, you will miss information and interrupt the discussion.

Discussion Guidelines:
An important aspect of seminar is critical discussion and debate. Feel free to disagree with the views of your classmates or present opposing conclusions or interpretations, but please do so in a respectful and courteous manner while keeping an open mind. Remember that many of the questions we will address in this class have many answers, often none that are right or wrong. I
have a zero-tolerance policy for offensive, intimidating or discriminatory language. It will be addressed immediately in class.

Paper policies:
All written assignments should be uploaded to canvas on the assigned day and meet the required page length when written in 12pt Times New Roman font, double-spaced. Please keep a copy of each of your assignments for later reference. **Extensions** are only available in extenuating circumstances. A request must be made ahead of time if the conflict is academic, as opposed to a personal emergency or injury. Late assignments will be deducted a half letter grade for every day it is late.

Evaluation:
Participation and Attendance: 25%
Reading Response: 5%
Article: 5%
Prospectus: 15%
Bibliography: 15%
Final paper/project: 35%

In-Class Requirements:
- Bring assigned texts/readings to class.
- Please turn off cellphones for the duration of class.
- Water or lidded beverages allowed, but please no eating in class!
- Laptops are not typically allowed in class; please let me know if you require one.

Availability: You may email me with any feedback, comments, concerns or questions. I will respond to emails sent after 6pm on the following day. Expect a response within 48hrs. I may respond in a group email to any questions raised by multiple students.

Accommodations: If you need disability-related accommodations in this class, if you have emergency medical information you wish to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please inform me immediately. Please see me privately after class or in my office hours.

Plagiarism: A definition: To copy text or ideas from another source without appropriate reference is plagiarism and will result in a failing grade for your assignment and usually further disciplinary action. For additional information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, see these university resources:
https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/Policies
https://college.uchicago.edu/advising/academic-integrity-student-conduct

Academic Integrity and Ethics: Cheating on exams and plagiarism are two common examples of dishonest, unethical behavior. Honesty and integrity help to build a sense of self-confidence, and are some of the best ways to build within relationships and the skills to repeatedly produce high quality work!
Schedule of Reading and Assignments

Week 1
- 4/2: Course introduction
  o Toni Morrison, A Mercy
  o Angela Davis, “Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role…” (C)
- 4/4: A Mercy and Davis cont.
  o Jennifer L. Morgan, Ch. 3 of Laboring Women, “The Breedings Shall Goe with Their Mothers”: Gender and Evolving Practices of Slaveownership in the English American Colonies (C)

Tituba, the Indian

Week 2
- 4/9: Tituba’s testimony and related trial documents (C)
  o Historical context of Salem witch trials
- 4/11: Scenes from adaptations (C)
  o Giles Corey of the Salem Farms, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1868)
  o The Crucible, Arthur Miller (1953)

Week 3
  o Angela Davis’ Foreword
  Academic article due
  - 4/18: I, Tituba discussion cont.
    o Donia Elizabeth Allen Poems, from “The Tituba Letters” (2006) (C)
  Article group discussions

Week 4
- 4/23: I, Tituba, second half
- 4/25: Ann Petry, Tituba of Salem Village (1991), selections (C)
  o Crucible film scenes (1996)

Phillis Wheatley

Week 5
- 4/30: Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral (1773), Phillis Wheatley
  Prospectus due
  - 5/2: Poems on Various Subjects, cont.
    In-class prospectus workshop

Week 6
- 5/7: “The Difficult Miracle of Black Poetry in America, Something like a sonnet for Phillis Wheatley” (2003) June Jordan; (C)
  o Cooper, Afua: My Name is Phillis Wheatley: A Story of Slavery and Freedom (C)
- 5/9: Professor Dana Murphy visits class
  - "Ballad for Phillis Wheatley" by Margaret Walker (C)
  - "Linkage (for Phillis Wheatley)" by Nikki Giovanni (C)
  - "Phillis Wheatley Poetry Festival" by Lucille Clifton (C)
  - "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens" by Alice Walker (C)
  - "Phillis Wheatley's First Effort" by Vincent Carretta (C)

Week 7
- 5/14: Professor Eric Slauter visits class
  - No More, America discussion (C)
  - “Looking for Scipio Moorhead,” Eric Slauter (C)

Bibliography due
- 5/16: Special Collections visit, view Poems on Various Subjects

Sally Hemings

Week 8
- 5/21: The Hemingses of Monticello, selections
  - In-class bibliography workshop
  - SNL video (C)
  - My Name is James Madison Hemings

Week 9
- 5/28: Marisa Williamson’s work
  - "Life Among the Lowly, No. 1" by Madison Hemings, March 13, 1873, (C)
- 5/30: Marisa Williamson visits class

Week 10
- 6/4: Final presentations/discussion
- 6/6: No Class- College Reading period

Final paper/project due: date TBD