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Black Feminism: Switching the Script on Traditional Feminist Narratives

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Black Feminism: Switching the Script on Traditional Feminist Narratives
Moneé Reis
Sponsor: Kathleen McIntyre (Gender and Women’s Studies, Honors Program)

Learning Outcomes
- Students will identify Black Feminist theorists and their contributions to past feminist movements.
- Students will apply Black Feminist Theory to mainstream discussions on feminism.
- Students will gain an understanding of the multiple ways intersectionality shapes the lives and experiences of Black women.

Proposed Course Description
This course aims to explore the development of Black Feminism. Students will read and critique diverse scholarship highlighting the role of Black Feminism in exploring the ways race, class, and sex intersect to create inequalities that traditional studies of feminism may not uncover. This class will analyze the issues Black women faced historically—especially in the Civil Rights Era—as well as the challenges Black women are confronting today.

Surprising Facts
- Decades before the rise of the modern women’s liberation movement, Black women were organizing against their systematic rape at the hands of white racist men.
- Black women were the first to have an original “Million Woman March” centered on Black women and their aspirations toward socioeconomic and political power.
- In 1974, an Alabama court found that between 100,000 and 150,000 poor Black teenagers were sterilized each year in Alabama due to the “Negro Project” in 1939, by Margaret Sanger’s American Birth Control League.
- In 2018, nearly 60 percent of Black women killed by police were unarmed at the time of the interaction.

Discussion
What is Black Feminism?
- It is an intersectional form of feminism that recognizes the inequalities and oppressions that Black women face in society.
- Response to the Civil Rights movement and racism from the mainstream feminist movement.

“Black women have suffered cruelly in this society from living the phenomenon of being Black and female in a country that is both racist and sexist.” - Margaret Sloan

“Today

#MeToo
- Founded by Tarana Burke in 2007
- A-list stars came forth sparking widespread media attention
- Women of color are not mentioned in the media

#BlackLivesMatter
- Founded by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, & Opal Tometi in 2013
- Created in response to the death of Trayvon Martin in 2012
- #SayHerName

“Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.”
- Alice Walker

“Ain’t I a Woman?”
- Sojourner Truth

“Black Feminism is not white feminism in blackface.”
- Audre Lorde

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