COURSE DESCRIPTION:
Examining novels by African American women at various junctures throughout the modern and postmodern periods, this course investigates representations of black women and pays particular attention to the ways black womanhood is characterized through intersectional paradigms of race, gender, sexuality, and social class. We will explore how selected authors render black female characters in ways that perpetuate, contest, and/or subvert stereotypical images of black women; expand limited constructions of black womanhood; and challenge or destabilize prevailing definitions of “woman” and “normativity” in American society. To help frame critical discussions of these novels, we will also engage a wide selection of black feminist scholarship.

REQUIRED BOOKS:
Nella Larsen’s *Quicksand* (1928)
Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)
Gwendolyn Brooks’s *Maud Martha* (1953)
Toni Morrison’s *Sula* (1973)
Ann Allen Shockley’s *Loving Her* (1974)
Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* (1982)
Pearl Cleage’s *What Looks Like Crazy on an Ordinary Day* (1997)

** Additional requisite readings provided electronically on Blackboard. **

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:
This course will enable students who apply themselves in an engaged manner; demonstrate a vested interest in the course materials and principles; and fulfill requisite assignments and course obligations to...

- Develop and strengthen skills in critical analysis, application, discussion, and presentation
- Enhance analytical and critical reading, writing, thinking, and interpretive skills
- Historicize and situate diverse texts by black women writers within their respective literary/cultural movement and tradition
- Gain a fuller, richer understanding of black women’s literature, particularly representations of black women within the American literary and cultural imagination, and engage critical scholarship in feminist and black women’s studies
COURSE OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS:
This course is devised to not simply introduce students to representations of black women throughout various historical moments, but to illustrate, by means of the novels and secondary materials, the ways in which images and characterizations of black women in the literature of African American women writers have developed and evolved with time. The sequence of readings is integral to showing this “progression,” as reflected in the lives of the characters, so it is essential that students read the designated assignments in order and not skip books or readings, as not to miss crucial stages in this evolution.

On a fundamental level, your commitment to this course—to the readings, critical analyses and discussions, intellectual engagements and assignments—is integral to your overall success. As such, and especially because the class meets once per week, students are expected to attend all classes, be punctual, and come prepared to contribute to class discussions. Your presence and participation count towards your grade. Missing more than two (2) classes—the equivalent of two weeks—will result in automatic failure and, therefore, an overall course grade of “F” due to excessive absence. In extenuating circumstances, please consult the instructor, as exceptions may be made depending on the circumstance.

Attendance & Punctuality:
If a student is absent on the day of a scheduled paper, quiz, or other graded assignment, she/he forfeits her/his right to complete it and will, as such, receive a failing grade of zero “F.” This does not apply, however, to students who give prior notification and receive my approval beforehand. Only in extenuating circumstances (e.g. documented illness, bereavement, official academic and/or athletic excursion, etc.) will a student be allowed to make-up a missed and/or late graded assignment; and, the opportunity to make-up such an assignment is conditional: the student must provide documentation: one form from a legitimate source (e.g. medical doctor, coach or athletic director, etc.) and an additional written statement or email from her/his academic advisor.

Participation & Classroom Conduct:
Students should be aware of the importance their participatory role plays in not only class discussion, but also in the learning process itself. While open dialogues, as well as diverse viewpoints, ideologies, and interpretations, are encouraged and especially welcome, students should always respect the opinions and subject positions of all students and faculty, whether or not they are in accord with your own. Offensive, inappropriate, derogatory, and/or politically incorrect comments or language will not be tolerated. Moreover, in the spirit of general respect and protocol, students should refrain from speaking while others students and the instructor are speaking. Cell phones and other electronic devices should be silenced and stowed away; and, unless students have received prior permission from the instructor to use laptops in the classroom, students should refrain from using those in class.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- 3 Short Critical Papers (2 pages each)
- In-Class Presentation
- Final Paper (10-15 pages)
All papers should be typed, 12-point standard font, double-spaced physical copies and are due at the
beginning of class. Late papers will not be accepted (see policy regarding missed/late assignments
under “Attendance”).

**Academic & Intellectual Honesty:**
All work you submit must represent and constitute your own work. Plagiarism and other forms of
intellectual dishonesty, such as cheating, are very serious offenses that will not be tolerated. Please
consult the guidelines of Loyola University (e.g. student handbook), to which I will adhere. Also, I will
report all instances of plagiarism and forms of academic/intellectual dishonesty.

**Students with Special Need Accommodations:**
All students regardless of ability or background are entitled and welcome to fully engage in my course
and the academic, social, and intellectual life of Loyola. As per the university guidelines, “A student
with a disability that qualifies for accommodations should contact Sarah Mead Smith, Director of
Disability Services at 865-2990 (Academic Resource Center, Room 405, Monroe Hall). A student
wishing to receive test accommodations (e.g., extended test time) should provide the instructor with an
official Accommodation Form from Disability Services in advance of the scheduled test date.”

**Emergency and Evaluation**
Should an emergency or evacuation cause disruption of classes, instruction for this course will
continue no later than 48 hours afterwards via Blackboard. It is your responsibility to check
Blackboard, as well as email regularly, to keep up with assignments and stay apprised of course
instruction.

**GRADING POLICY:**
Final course grades will be calculated accordingly:

Short Critical Papers (10% each): 30%
In-Class Presentation: 20%
Final Paper: 30%
Attendance & Participation: 20%

A+ = (100-98)  B+ = (89-87)  C+ = (79-77)  D+ = (69-67)  F = (59 and Below)
A  = (96-93)    B  = (86-83)  C  = (76-73)  D  = (66-63)
A- = (92-90)    B- = (82-80)  C- = (72-70)  D- = (62-60)

**Note:** This syllabus is tentative and may be subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. In such
an event, students will be given prior notification and/or revised documentation.
**SCHEDULE OF COURSE MEETINGS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 11</td>
<td><strong>Introduction to the Course</strong> Overview, Framework, and Terminologies</td>
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| January 18 | Patricia Hill Collins, Excerpt of “Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images” [B]  
Darlene Clark Hine, “Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance” [B]  
**SHORT CRITICAL PAPER #1 DUE** |
| January 19 | **MLK Week of Peace Convocation Lecture -- 6 p.m. -- Roussell**  
NIKKI GIOVANNI -- “Human by the Grace of God: The Dream and Diversity” |
| January 25 | Deborah McDowell, Excerpt of “Introduction” to *Quicksand*  
Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* |
| February 1 | Mary Helen Washington, “Foreword” to *Their Eyes Were Watching God*  
Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*  
**PRESENTATION** |
| February 8 | Gwendolyn Brooks, *Maud Martha*  
Mary Helen Washington, “‘Taming All That Anger Down’: Rage and Silence in Gwendolyn Brooks’ *Maud Martha*” [B]  
**PRESENTATION** |
| February 15 | [S]: Mya Baker’s *Silence: In Search of Black Women’s Sexuality in America*  
Lisa B. Thompson, From *Beyond the Black Lady: Sexuality and the New African American Middle Class* [B]  
**SHORT CRITICAL PAPER #2 DUE** |
| February 22 | Toni Morrison, *Sula*  
Listen to audio excerpts of *Sula* read by Morrison  
bell hooks, “Revolutionary Black Women: Making Ourselves Subject” [B]  
**PRESENTATION** |
| March 1    | Evelynn Hammonds, “Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality” [B]  
Rhonda Williams, “Living at the Crossroads: Explorations in Race, Nationality, Sexuality, and Gender” [B]  
**SHORT CRITICAL PAPER #3 DUE** |

***March 4    LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW ***
March 8  MARDI GRAS – NO CLASS!!

March 15  Screening: Marlon Rigg’s *Black Is, Black Ain’t*
           Ann Allen Shockley, *Loving Her*, chapters 1-10

March 22  Ann Allen Shockley, *Loving Her*, 11-21
           Trimiko C. Melancon, “Towards an Aesthetic of Transgression: Ann Allen Shockley’s
           *Loving Her* and the Politics of Same-Gender Loving” [B]
           PRESENTATION

March 29  Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*
           PRESENTATION

April  5  READING DAY/SCREENING!!!

April 12  Gloria Naylor, *The Women of Brewster Place*
           PRESENTATION

April 19  EASTER – NO CLASS!!

April 26  [S]: *The Women of Brewster Place*

May  3  Pearl Cleage, *What Looks Like Crazy on an Ordinary Day*
        Synthesis & Summation

***FINAL PAPER DUE – MAY 3, 2011***