

# Making Lemonade:

## Beyoncé and the Aesthetics of Black Womanhood

Fall 2016

Wednesdays: 3-3:50

Class Location: Science Center 145

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Ashanté Reese

**OFFICE HOURS:** Tues. and Thurs. 4-5:30pm; Wednesday 4-5p; by appt

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### Course Description

**“If we do something over and over, it becomes normal. If we see the same thing over and over, it becomes normal. If only boys are made class monitor, then at some point we will all think, even if unconsciously, that the class monitor has to be a boy. If we keep seeing only men as heads of corporations, it starts to seem “natural” that only men should be heads of corporations.” - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists***

Art, in its many forms, has a way of disrupting (or reinforcing) what we consider “normal.” In all its forms, it calls us to the carpet; asks us to consider and reconsider what it attempts to teach us about ourselves and about the world. To be knowledgeable consumers of artistic expressions, we must sit with a work, consider it, dismiss it, consume it. Using Beyoncé’s *Lemonade* as a main text, this colloquium asks us to consider, critique, and celebrate black women’s artistic expression. What does it mean for black women to control and produce imagery? Which black women’s experiences are validated through these images? Whose are silenced? Can black women’s art both resist and reinforce capitalism? Who has the right to define and measure authenticity? How does Beyoncé use (appropriate?) other artists’ work in *Lemonade*? These are a few of the questions we will consider as we explore the images and lyrics in Beyoncé’s *Lemonade* alongside cultural analyses and critiques of it. This course asks you to not only view and listen to *Lemonade* but to dissect it, examine its parts, and put it back together again. Students should leave this class with skills to analyze *Lemonade* and other works of art from a variety of intellectual perspectives.

### Course Goals

- To analyze themes in *Lemonade* and make broader connections to black women's artistic expressions and lives
- To explore the complex and sometimes contradictory goals and outcomes of artistic expression
- To develop the craft of critiquing artistic works
- To collaboratively create an artistic piece that reflects one or more themes from the course

### Required Texts

- *Lemonade* (available on iTunes, Tidal, and Amazon)
- *We Should All Be Feminists*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- All other texts, images, and films available on Moodle

**\*\*\*\*please bring a hard copy of each text to class each week.\*\*\*\***

### Course Requirements

- **Participation (25%):** This is a discussion-based class, and the quality of each class session will largely depend on you. Your participation grade will include (but is not limited to): the amount and quality of your in-class interactions, in-class activities and assignments, homework assignments, office hour discussions, and attendance.
- **Journal (40%):** Each week, you will prepare a typed, single-spaced, 1-page write up that includes an Insight, a Critique, and a Question. An insight is something you learned, gained, or noticed in the readings and videos for that week. You should refrain from focusing on what you like or dislike. Instead, identify and explain at least one element of the reading or videos that reveals something about the work as a whole. A critique is a well-developed critical assessment of the readings or film. Critical does not inherently mean "negative." Your critique should focus on an assessment that you can articulate and support. Finally, you will end your 1-page write up with a question. Your question should not be phrased in a "yes" or "no" or "do you think that...." format. Rather, you should phrase your question in a manner that sparks classroom conversation and dialogue. A great question will lead us to make connections between the art, the texts, and everyday "real" life. I have posted Blooms Taxonomy on Moodle. Your questions should be geared toward higher order thinking. **Each entry is due at the beginning of the class period. You will submit your journal electronically at two points in the semester: at the midterm and at the end of the course.**
- **Final Project (35%):** For your final project, you will work in small groups to conceptualize, design, execute, and present a collaborative artistic piece that explores one or more theme discussed throughout the semester. Each step of the process (the conceptualization, design, execution, and presentation) will be assessed. Your artistic piece can be a video similar to *Lemonade*, a photo essay, or some other form decided in consultation with me. More complete details will be posted on Moodle. **DUE DATE: TBA**