RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Teaching Afrofuturisms as American Cultural Studies

by Makeba Lavan

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I want a Black world where the matter of mattering matters indisputably, where Black mattering is beyond expression. I want to read and study in the orientation of a Black world.

- Kevin Quashie, Black Aliveness, Or A Poetics of Being, 2021

I started as an Assistant Professor in the English Department at Grinnell College in 2019. The first six months was an exciting whirlwind as I got to know my students and colleagues in person. But the end of spring and all of fall 2020 meant an initially frenzied and then more intentional pivot to online seven-week instruction. The stress and uncertainty of the pandemic—combined with the tense, frenetic, and seemingly never-ending summer tutorials for learning how to teach online and in truncated time frames—left me with the steepest, rockiest learning curve of my career. Ultimately, it meant paring down and simplifying.

I spent untold hours over the summer reading and thinking about ways to keep morale and participation high; how do I translate the classroom community rapport to a digital space? How do I teach and facilitate at a time when we all feared for our lives as well as the lives of our loved ones? How do we read, think, and write together in a way that holds space for grief, uncertainty, and death? Is it even ethical to do so? In these times, I am reminded of an integral fact I used to relay to my Lehman College students: college is real life. What we do here matters. In the midst of multiple pandemics and the Information Age's rampant anti-intellectualism, now more than ever, thinking, reading, and writing critically *matter*. As such, this article examines three Afrofuturisms courses taught during the pandemic to highlight the necessity of Black-centered teaching and learning in the fight against fascism and historical erasure. I also provide practical syllabi and assignments for other instructors to consider.

Critical Pedagogy and Centering Blackness

In the wake of the novel coronavirus and my seventh year of teaching, I have learned more about critical/socially conscious pedagogies than ever before. At Lehman College (CUNY), my previous institution, most of my students were Black or Latinx and first-generation. Many were older with families and careers. A good portion also identified as LGBTQIA+ and/or disabled. For most of these students, the literature we studied was the literature of their cultures and/or life experience. At my current institution, Grinnell College, the vast majority of my students are not Black or people of color. Much of the intellectual heavy lifting necessitates frankness regarding historical and cultural context, interrogation of social location, and, as one of my students, Bethany, said on the first day of ENG 329 this semester, acknowledging "the elephants in the room."

To aid in this process, I collaborate with students to establish community guidelines that foster mutual enthusiasm and respect. In class, we read the syllabus's note on offensive language and we discuss what it means, leaving time for questions. By the end of the first class period, I invite them to think of guidelines that would help build and maintain a respectful collaborative learning community for everyone. Over the next two class periods, we hone the guidelines until we all verbally agree. During the course of the semester, we refer back to them on an as-needed basis. I have been doing this since I started teaching and find that most students contribute more because these guidelines are in place. They are invaluable given the often contentious nature of teaching and learning African American history and culture in a mostly white space.

As students learn Black Radical/liberatory frameworks and use them to interrogate their social location, the dire consequences that exist as a result of the dearth of Black history and culture taught in schools reveal themselves. In her article "Ending Curriculum Violence," my colleague Dr. Stephanie P. Jones addresses this:

> Our failure to educate students on this subject means there is also a lapse in student understanding of racial inequality, past and present. Not only is slavery being mistaught; it's also the only thing some students are learning about Black history at school. The transatlantic slave trade and its resulting horror within the American slavery system are often essentialized as all Black history itself.

White students in my courses are earnest and often naïve regarding the wide-reaching tendrils of racial capitalism. Even more so, I have found that many students, regardless of race or ethnicity, have rarely ever read books that do not center white people, and the protagonist they envision in their minds is usually white unless explicitly stated otherwise (as Toni Morrison brilliantly unpacks in *Playing in the Dark).* When students do read books by or about Black people, many of these narratives are trauma-based and focus solely on the perceived deficit of marginalized identity.

But as bell hooks states, marginality is "much more than a site of deprivation…it is also a site of radical possibility, a space of resistance." This marginality is embraced as a gift, one that allows for the imagining and ultimately the creation of better, more inclusive futures and worlds. The lived experience at the margins allows us to truly see the cracks and fissures in our current white supremacist regime. Many of these cracks are the same ones Black people have been highlighting for centuries. The writers that we examine in my Afrofuturisms courses not only point them out, they also often offer solutions.

My favorite definition of Afrofuturism comes from famed sociologist Dr. Alondra Nelson. In an interview, Nelson defines Afrofuturism as "an epistemology that is thinking about the subject position of Black people; aspirations for modernity, having a place in modernity, the resilience of black culture and black life is about imagining the impossible, imagining a better place, a different world." This definition wonderfully explains the necessity for centering Blackness in order to move past a world plagued by institutional racism. In our classroom community, we privilege non-dominating voices and, as a result, students

gain a more complete view of literature, history, and their relation to our contemporary moment.

Afrofuturism excavates lost identities and cultural ties, but it also celebrates present-day diasporan culture, even as it looks to the future. In this way, it is important to acknowledge and take charge of what stories non-dominating cultures are able to tell/have told about themselves.

We often talk about African American literature and culture in terms of pain and we erase the joy, even as the dominating culture is always stealing the representations of our joy and selling it back to us. As such, the representations of our joy (digital fellowship, entertainment, food, speech, fashion, swag) becomes American, even as we are still disenfranchised. Part of what we saw with the texts and art we reviewed this semester is that Black people have always resisted cultural flattening/erasure but these resistances are aggressively rewritten or expunged.

Pandemic Pedagogy Across Three Courses

Spring 2020-Afrofuturisms

In late January 2020, I started teaching my first Afrofuturisms course at Grinnell College. I wanted to provide experiences for the class, mainly because I recall how immersion helped me retain historical and cultural lessons during my own college experience. As a result, in the beginning of the semester the students attended my short lecture at the Grinnell College Museum of Art where I discussed the visual artist Damon Davis's new exhibit within the context of Afrofuturism. This museum visit served several purposes: it got the students into the museum and out of the classroom and they were also introduced to Afrofuturistic visual art as text. After the 20-minute lecture, the class perused the exhibit and discussed their favorite pieces.

Two months later, we gleefully piled into a comfortable college-provided vehicle and rode for an hour to explore and create zines at the Center for Afrofuturist Studies in Iowa City. Prior to the visit, the students, all juniors and seniors, were surprised to learn that there was a center dedicated to Afrofuturism in Iowa, and only a little over an hour away at that. We talked about the erased/buried/little known history of Black people in the Midwest. We also discussed the purpose of zines, and the students expressed excitement that their art would be donated to the center. At the center, we learned about Martine Syms's "Mundane Afrofuturist Manifesto," a call to creatives to stop relying heavily on tired tropes and easy otherworldly answers when creating Afrofuturist art. Her manifesto became the backbone for the final project in which I would ask the class to describe their own afrofuture.

However, the following week, the college announced that we were moving ahead with distance learning and everyone geared up to help students get home safely, and then spring break saw us scrambling to figure out how to adapt our classes for online instruction. We moved on, kept going, even in the midst of our terror. Most of the days from mid-March to May 2020 are hazy but I remember the final in-person meeting with the students. We sat in our classroom in a circle and discussed our concerns: What would the rest of the semester look like? How would we all stay safe? As a group, we decided to drop the largest book on the syllabus and moved forward with one synchronous meeting a week to discuss the reading. I also dropped the final paper assignment and asked the students to submit some thoughts about the readings instead. This was all any of us had the bandwidth for. The coronavirus robbed us of our final weeks together.

Spring 2021- "Bodyminds Reimagined" in Black Women's Speculative Fiction

By spring 2021, we were meeting online and classes were only seven weeks long. It felt like such a daunting task to create a practical, impactful syllabus in seven weeks. Nevertheless, I taught a new Afrofuturisms course titled, "Bodyminds Reimagined in Black Women's Speculative Fiction." Named after Sami Schalk's amazing book, we explored the questions she provides for us:

> What might it mean to imagine disability differently? Differently from the stereotypical stories of pity, helplessness, and victimhood, of evil, bitterness, and abjection, of nonsexuality and isolation, of overcoming and supercrips? What would it mean to imagine disability differently than these dominant cultural narratives we typically encounter? What might it mean to imagine blackness differently? Womanhood differently? Sexuality differently? (2)

These questions, especially relevant now, were the guiding questions for the course wherein we focused heavily on disability and the ways it is portrayed in a society where many people are becoming disabled as a result of COVID-19. As with many examples of privilege, how we think and talk about disability changed during the quarantine year. We watched as able-bodied people with power rolled out innovative responses to the pandemic that were based on things that disabled people have been requesting for years, such as the ability to work and learn from home.

As a result, disability came up in class time and again because Afrofuturism centers Blackness in all its intersections while recovering erasures and imagining futures devoid of the overwhelming oppression of white terrorism. The conversations around disability were mostly focused on Octavia Butler's *Mind of My Mind* and Nnedi Okorafor's *The Book of Phoenix.* The way students discuss disability represents its own type of excavation or negation of erasure.

For example, one student, Gabe, states that "Butler's works frequently force readers to reconsider how they define 'human'." In his paper, which analyzes *Mind of My* Mind alongside Butler's short story, "The Evening and The Morning and the Night," Gabe asks: "what social implications does Butler's portrayal of interdependence carry…and how does this interdependence affect future understandings of (dis)ability?" Using Sami Schalk's definition of "a socially constructed concept that deems certain bodyminds and

behaviors acceptable and others pathologically nonnormative and deviant" (Disability Metaphor, 149) and Kafer's political/relational model of disability, in which "the problem of disability no longer resides in the minds or bodies of individuals but in built environments and social patterns that exclude or stigmatize particular kinds of bodies" (6), Gabe reads the "latents" in Butler's novel and the DGDs in the short story as disabled. This was particularly fascinating because of the mental rather than physical natures of the disabilities.

There were also conversations about the so-called "invisibly" disabled and the treatment they receive in society. Another student, Oona, makes a similar argument to Gabe's. She agrees that the latent psychics have limited and uncontrollable power that can be read as disability (Butler 17) but she also connects the novel's discussion of disability to the complicated relationship that Black people have with western medicine in real life. She uses Therí Alyce Pickens's book, *Black Madness :: Mad Blackness*, to discuss "the historical distrust between medical personnel and Black communities [which?] tends to calcify an intracultural dictum that disability be taken care of within families or local enclaves" (51). Therefore, Oona connects the experience of latents' mental disability in the novel with the taboo of mental illness in the current U.S. She writes, "Octavia Butler's Mind of My Mind urges readers to reimagine society, as Mary has in her utopia, to create systems of mental health care that actually support people with mental disorders. Her novel reminds us that locking people away in prisons and hospitals is harmful and that people deserve to have a community where they feel supported."

Lisette, also writing about Butler's *Mind of My Mind,* juxtaposes it with Okorafor's *The Book of Phoenix*. She argues that "speculative fiction is a playground in which Black, queer, and disabled bodies become the forefront of storytelling, and the vessel for interrogating what we deem 'unnatural'." Lisette sees the novels, and Black women's speculative fiction as a whole, as a genre that subverts and rejects Eurocentric beauty standards and bodily notions, allowing bodies that have been shunned by a eugenicist society to wield the most power. They are reborn in new forms, both psychic and mythical, reinventing what it means to have a body and queering the colonialist rhetoric that has long defined them.

Allison's discussion of "disability transmission" really hit home. Prior to the novel coronavirus—the first global pandemic of my students' lives—many of them did not think of disability as something that can be transmitted. Allison writes about the ways that "characters transmit the label and reality of disability onto others. Through the transmission of disability, these speculative fiction novels explore imagined futures for Black and disabled characters and the imagined consequences for continued exploitation of people within these categories." Using crip theory, she engaged deeply with Alison Kafer's *Feminist, Queer, Crip* and Sami Schalk's *Bodyminds Reimagined* to analyze the ways in which the medical industry ignores, denigrates and punishes "those who lack a 'proper' (read: medically acceptable, doctor-provided, and insurer-approved) diagnosis for their symptoms" under the realm of disability and departs "from the social model's assumption that

'disabled' and 'nondisabled' are discrete, self-evident categories, choosing instead to explore the creation of such categories and the moments in which they fail to hold" (Kafer 36, 18)." Allison astutely remarks upon the ways that Butler and Okorafor eschew both the traditional utopias free of diversity and disability as well as the dystopian futures overrun by the previously abled who become miserably disabled.

The "imagined futures in both *Mind of My Mind* and *The Book of Phoenix* offer plots wherein the main characters, both Black and disabled, work to create better futures for themselves where their identities are not exploited. They work with preestablished tropes in science fiction, such as the cyborg and 'supercrip,' in order to actively alter negative depictions" (Isztok 8). The conversations we had regarding Blackness, speculative fiction/Afrofuturism, and disability would not have happened without the coronavirus pandemic. For one, we are living through a mass disabling event. The students recognized that and were able to process and provide intersectional analysis of the texts because they are seeing many of the themes play out in real time. At the end of the course, we left more knowledgeable about the dangers of ableism in the U.S. and the role that Afrofuturism can have in creating more inclusive futures for all.

Fall 2021-Early Afrofutures

After a year and a half of virtual learning and teaching, by fall 2021 we taught and learned in person with vaccine and mask mandates. One of the most interesting things about the Early Afrofutures course in which we focused on the late nineteenth/early twentieth century as opposed to the late twentieth and early twenty-first, was grappling with the so-called "Negro Problem." Early Afrofutures situates Black people not as a problem but as a solution. It is similar to the Black feminist ideological statement in the Combahee River Collective that if Black women are lifted up, so is everyone else. Early African American writers knew they had to imagine a way forward and through racial capitalism. My goal with this class was to show that the (sub)genre we call Afrofuturism is not new and, in fact, the need to situate blackness and imagine better futures is the root of the African American literary tradition. Black writers in the nineteenth and early twentieth century wrote mostly to claim African humanity and culture within the dominant society, and to create paths to full enfranchisement and citizenship in a post-emancipation world.

The first assignment was to research Afrofuturism definitions and analyze the one they liked most. With this assignment, I wanted students to see how wide-ranging and far-reaching the definitions and definers are. Here are a few excerpts and analyses from that assignment:

Paddy: According to Michael Bennett, Afrofuturism describes "new plausible social arrangements, political structures, and technological systems" (Bennett 92). In many ways, this initial definition reads very similarly to that of science or speculative fiction, without offering an example of how Afrofuturism differs. But Bennett elaborates, discussing how Afrofuturism "estranges" the

reader from the idea that "life must be as it currently is" (Bennett 92).

Sam: In the case of Afrofuturism, however, power comes from imagining worlds where people do not struggle with structural oppression and instead live outside of the constraints of our current, real history. The focus on hope is extremely important. These are not stories about disasters and trauma and pain, or stories where the trauma is based around stereotypes or twisted tellings of history. This is not to say that Afrofuturism cannot contain disasters, trauma, pain, or truth, but the objective of the story is to uplift and create new futures, where it is possible for Black people to "thrive in [their] own culture, where [they] imagine [themselves] achieving greatness without external influence" (Fields).

Bethany: Initially, I saw technology in Afrofuturism's definition as a limiting factor until I understood how Blackness, Black diasporic culture, and Black survival techniques can all be interpreted as technology. Now, I see common practices of Black culture and survival to be technology. For instance, the tool of improvisation is technology. Continuously, being able to cultivate culture and adapt it to your surrounding circumstances is a technologically advanced skill. And communicating through cultural codes demonstrates how self-preservation and Black creativity are both technologies.

Keir: I love the activist spark in (Dr. Grace) Gipson's definition. It reminds me that radical imagination is always necessary for change—whether in the classroom, the justice system, community organizing, or anywhere else… Gipson's analysis focuses primarily on Afrofuturist ideas spread on Twitter. I would also argue that Black Twitter, as a driver of culture, education, and radical imagination that takes place with the assistance of technology, is a form of Afrofuturism in action. I think of the Noname book club, which has facilitated discussions of race, racism, and abolition on Twitter, in person and even between incarcerated people and book club members.

The students articulated and analyzed well-rounded complex definitions that expanded their thought process regarding Black history and current cultural expressions.

With multiple definition in their consciousness, I took advantage of our in-person status and coordinated a class trip to the Grinnell Museum of Art and Burling Library in hopes that the juxtaposition of modern art and historical writing would provide tangible connections between the past and present. At the museum, Curator of Academic and Community Outreach Tilly Woodward led the class through the new exhibit *Queer/Dialogue.* The show theme was actually suggested by an alum who happened to be in my spring 2020 Afrofuturisms course, and it featured three exquisitely poignant pieces by Devan Shimoyama:
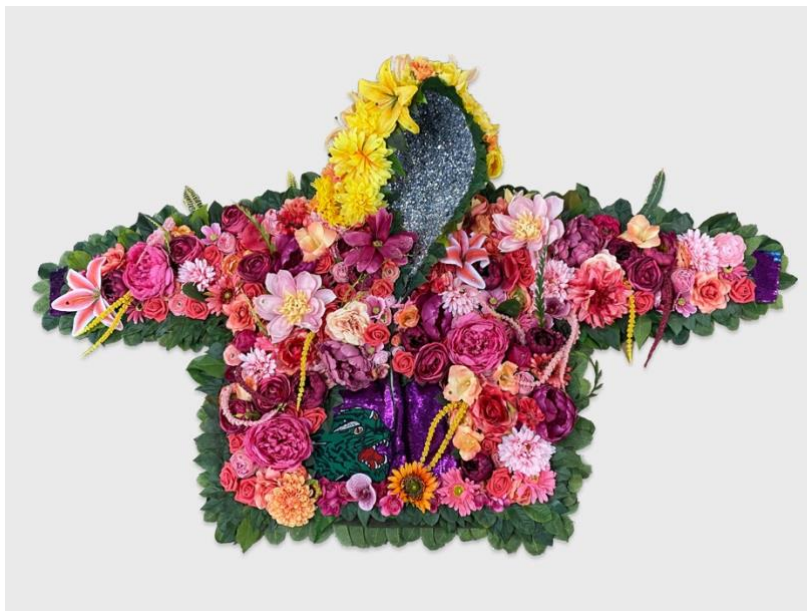
DEVAN SHIMOYAMA, *UNTITLED (FOR TRAYVON)*, 2020, SILK FLOWERS, BEADS, AND RHINESTONES ON FABRIC WITH STEEL MOUNT AND FRAME, 48 X 76 IN. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND KAVI GUPTA. PHOTOGRAPHER JOHN LUSIS.

DEVAN SHIMOYAMA, *UNTITLED (FOR TAMIR)*, 2019, CHAINS, SILK FLOWERS, RHINESTONES, BEADS, AND FABRIC ON SWING SEATS, INDUSTRIAL STEEL SWING SET, MIRRORED PLEXI PLATFORM, AND WOOD 96 X 82 X 158 IN. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND KAVI GUPTA. PHOTOGRAPHER JOHN LUSIS.]

Shimoyama is very clear about his motivations for art: "I don't depict Black figures in pain. I'm not interested in seeing more of those images circulate throughout the world…in works like Untitled (For Tamir) it's a way for me to celebrate their life."

One of the students, Abraham, connected Shimoyama's art with the ideas presented in Martine Syms's "Mundane Afrofuturist Manifesto" in his post-museum reflection:

Both "Untitled (For Trayvon)" and "Untitled (For Tamir)" evoked a reaction from me that felt surprisingly joyful, forward-looking, or optimistic, while still honoring the reality of the current and past moments that led to these pieces. Because the pieces are memorials connected to real people and historical moments, it might not have been my first instinct to categorize them as Afrofuturist, but their aesthetics were provocatively futuristic. Both pieces surpass the brutality and injustice of these children's murders with the vibrance and joy in their composition, while still honoring and amplifying the vacant spaces left by white supremacist violence. Something about these pieces really resonated with Martine Syms' "Mundane Afrofuturist Manifesto" for me. These pieces can dream or urge a future where this joy continues to live, where these childhood spaces continue to be occupied by life, without relying on the science fiction tropes that Syms criticizes. The subject, the murder of Black children, is often treated as shockingly and disturbingly mundane. By delving into and physically filling the mundane objects linked to Trayvon and Tamir's deaths with imagery representing joy, there is a sense of urgency and resonance that couldn't be evoked by more explicitly futuristic tropes.

After a lengthy discussion of *Queer/Dialogue,* Tilly led us out of the museum and next door to Burling Library. Downstairs in the hall outside of the Print Study room are thirteen of the fifteen prints from Jacob Lawrence's *Toussaint L'Ouverture* series. As we reflected on the prints, one of the students, Keir, wrote:

The prints of Toussaint Louverture connected as well: I had never heard of him before Tuesday's class. I have been returning again and again to the Afrofuturist idea that the struggle for liberation and dismantling of white supremacy transcends time. It seems that reimagining the past and the present is just as crucial to Afrofuturism as reimagining the future – especially when white supremacist narratives dominate the past and the present.

Another student, Maya, reflected: "I also noticed how in the series of paintings we see the whole of L'Ouverture's life: I think often when we learn about historical figures, we only learn about their 'big' moments, not necessarily who they are and where they came from."

The week before fall break we returned to the library, this time to peruse archival materials related to Black life in Grinnell. I arranged the session because archives are cool and students rarely interact with them. Many students were beyond excited to realize that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Ellison, and Louis Armstrong were all present for 1967's Convocation: The Liberal Arts College in a World of Change. Ironically, several students sadly but astutely remarked on the nearly identical nature of Concerned Black Students' (CBS) demands in the 1960s and today.

Bethany, a current member of CBS, delighted in all the material from the '60s about the organization. She took pics that highlighted events and organizing strategies, happy to

DEVAN SHIMOYAMA, *POTTED*, 2018. OIL, COLOR PENCIL, FLASHE, RHINESTONES, ACRYLIC, COLLAGE AND GLITTER ON CANVAS STRETCHED OVER PANEL. 72 X 84 IN

be able to bring them back to the organization. She also talked about helping resurrect the student newspaper/journal, *Black Voices*. The session was a perfect example of the reasons Black history deserves to be remembered and centered. These outings were designed to stimulate creativity as students began drafting their final assignments.

As a callback to that first semester teaching Afrofuturisms at Grinnell, I assigned Martine Syms again as a leadup to the revamped final essay assignment. Instead of asking the students to imagine and describe an afrofuture (an assignment that I have come to realize is too broad), I created the following:

- In many dominating-culture/mainstream futures, BIPOC, queer, and disabled people are erased.

- Part 1: Choose a text from the syllabus and articulate 1-2 specific ways the author fought against this erasure.

- Part 2: Choose one institution and highlight the characteristics and benchmarks of white supremacy within. Be sure to use archival/legal sources. Then describe how the institution might function in a future devoid of white supremacist characteristics and benchmarks.

This assignment is the culmination of teaching 2.5 Afrofuturisms courses at Grinnell. What I have come to

realize is that students are very good at historicizing African American literature and culture. As a result, the class had no problem with part one of the final essay. However, part two is a struggle. Most students are being asked to center Black people for the first time in their lives and actively investigate how racism remains embedded in all institutions. Once I realized that most of the class struggled with part two, we worked in pairs to help each person choose an institution and discuss concrete ways that institutional racism rears its ugly head as well as real life alternatives that are being practiced. From there, they were able to start thinking critically and creatively about what institutions devoid of baked-in racism would look like. I look forward to reading their freedom dreams.

Conclusion

And so, I return to Nelson's definition. For me, it is no coincidence that Afrofuturism has exploded during this stage of late capitalism. In the midst of a global pandemic where world leaders are doubling down on nationalism and racial capitalism, "an epistemology that is thinking about the subject position of Black people" is one that focuses on global community solutions, the likes of which we have yet to see. And so often, in class or during office hours, students come to a difficult and inconvenient truth: Our world is exactly as we continue to make it. Part of my charge in teaching Afrofuturism is to aid students in this realization and help them identify concrete ways that they can help society reach critical mass for change. The Black artists/activists we study invite us to eschew the current world order and imagine otherwise because, for most of us, we do not wish to continue integrating into a burning building when we can just decide to do something different, better.

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Appendix:
ENGLISH-329: Studies in African American Literature
"Afrofuturisms"

Spring 2020

COVER ART FIGURE BY ELIZA LAZO FOR ARCANGEL IMAGES. ART BURNING FIELD BY HARALD SUND FOR GETTY IMAGES.

A Note on Hate Speech and Offensive Language

Hate speech and slurs such as the n-word and f-word will not be tolerated. While you may see it in print or hear it in film, if you need to discuss these terms in class, you will say the n-/f- or whichever other non-explicit term. The same thing applies while writing your papers. Further, while writing your papers, please do not use the words "whites" or "Blacks" while describing people. We're discussing people, not laundry. The same goes for "females." A person who identifies as a female human is either a girl or a woman. Since we already have these terms, please use them. Finally, remember to privilege the person. People are not slaves, ex-cons, collateral damage, infidels, etc. They are enslaved PEOPLE, formerly incarcerated PEOPLE, murdered PEOPLE, PEOPLE who are either nonreligious or have other religious beliefs. Terms that dehumanize others allow bigotry to continue and the community we build during the semester will be built upon mutual respect. Unlearning deep-seated/subconscious bigotry is an active, life-long process. One must be prepared to examine oneself and let go of harmful/hateful ideas. And while conscious harm will not be tolerated, we will not engage in a cancelling/pitchfork carrying castigation if someone in our classroom community falters in speech or behavior. Undoing bigotry is messy work, and we must leave space for growth.

Course Schedule*

	Monday	Wednesday
Week 1:		Introduction/Course Overview/What is African American Literature?

Jan 22, 24		
Week 2: **Jan 27, 29**	Damon Davis Exhibit + 20 minutes @11	*Dark Matter* excerpts, Sheree Thomas Walter Mosley, "Black to the Future;" Octavia Butler, "The Monophobic Response"
Week 3: **Feb 3, 5**	This American Life, "We Are In The Future" Drexciya	*The Deep, Rivers Solomon* "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation", Toni Morrison
Week 4: **Feb 10, 12**	*The Deep,* Rivers Solomon Excerpts, *In the Wake,* Christina Sharpe	Excerpts: *How Long Til Black Future Month?,* N.K. Jemisin *Dirty Computer: An Emotion Picture,* Janelle Monae *Response paper #1 due.*
Week 5: **Feb 17, 19**	*Black No More,* George Schuyler	*Black No More,* George Schuyler Samuel Delany, "Racism and Science Fiction"
Week 6: **Feb 24, 26**	"The Comet", W.E.B. Du Bois "Lex Talionis", Robert Bagnall	**Library Visit.**
Week 7: **March 2, 4**	Watch: *Fast Color* Hortense Spillers "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book"	**Class visit: The Center for Afrofuturist Studies, Iowa City.**
Week 8: **March 9, 11**	**Flex period.**	*American Gods* Episode *Response paper #2 due.*
SPRING BREAK SPRING BREAK SPRING BREAK SPRING BREAK		
Week 9: **March 30, April 1**	*Children of Blood and Bone,* Tomi Adeyemi (to pg. 268)	*Children of Blood and Bone,* Tomi Adeyemi (to 347)
Week 10: **April 6, 8**	*Children of Blood and Bone,* Tomi Adeyemi (end of novel)	**Film selection.**

Week 11: April 13, 15	*Mind of My Mind,* Octavia Butler	*Mind of My Mind,* Octavia Butler *Response paper #3 due.*
Week 12: April 20, 22	*Electric Arches,* Eve L. Ewing	*Electric Arches,* Eve L. Ewing
Week 13: April 27, 29	**Art selections.**	**Flex period.**
Week 14: May 4, 6	*Shuri: The Search for Black Panther,* Nnedi Okorafor Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams (*excerpt)	*Lemonade,* Beyonce Celebration and reflection. *Final Project due.*

*this is the proposed schedule which was altered by the global pandemic. Post spring break, the class elected to end the semester with *Mind of My Mind, Electric Arches,* and *Lemonade.*

ENGLISH 329: "Bodyminds Reimagined" in Black Women's Speculative Fiction
Spring 2021

Week 1:

T, 2/2	Introduction/Who are we in the world today?
	Course Overview/What is Black Speculative Fiction?
	Amanda Gorman's Inauguration poem:
	https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/20/politics/amanda-gorman-inaugural-poem-transcript/index.html
	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/19/books/amanda-gorman-inauguration-hill-we-climb.html
	https://edition.cnn.com/2021/01/23/politics/amanda-gorman-inauguration-james-baldwin/index.html
Th, 2/4	*Mind of My Mind,* Foreword to the end of chapter 6.
	Bodyminds Reimagined, (Introduction) Sami Schalk
	Robin D.G. Kelley. *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*, "Introduction"

Week 2:

T, 2/9	*Mind of My Mind,* conclusion
	Excerpt from: Chapter 3, "Afrofuturist Entanglements of Gender, Eugenics, and Queer Possibility (pp. 99-128)", *Old Futures: Speculative Fiction and Queer Possibility,* Alexis Lothian
Th, 2/11	*The Book of Phoenix,* Nnedi Okorafor (foreword to the end of chapter 6)
AGM:	*Dirty Computer,* Janelle Monae (YouTube) Or *Black is King*, Beyonce (Disney+).

Week 3:

T, 2/16	*The Book of Phoenix,* Nnedi Okorafor (chapter 7-the end of chapter 19)
	"Making Monstrous Subjects", Monstrous Intimacies, Christina Sharpe
	Thesis/Abstract Submission.
Th, 2/18	*The Book of Phoenix,* Nnedi Okorafor, conclusion
	Ruha Benjamin, "Black Afterlives Matter"
	Nnedi Okorafor TED Talk
AGM:	Avant-Guardians, Episodes 1-7:
	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYWU0UC2zIk-c9k7pxm42Vq

Week 4:

T, 2/23	*The Deep*
	"The Wake", In the Wake: On Blackness and Being, Christina Sharpe
	Annotated Bibliography due.
Th, 2/25	*The Deep*
	Notanda, M. NourbeSe Philip
	Midterm recap and reflections. Be prepared to share your thoughts in small groups!
AGM:	Pumzi by Wanuri Kahiu: https://vimeo.com/46891859
	Lovecraft Country, "I Am"

Week 5:

T, 3/2	Creating Contemporary Mythologies in Black Art: Session 1
	Black to Techno Screening with jessica Care moore's class
	Materials Forthcoming.
Th, 3/4	Creating Contemporary mythologies in Black Art: Session 2
	Jessica Care Moore's Afrofuturistic Techno Choreopoem *"Salt City"* Screening and Discussion
	Materials Forthcoming.
AGM:	**Research Paper draft due.**
	Peer Review: Submit your worksheets by **Thursday at noon**.

Week 6:

T, 3/9	Short stories:
	"The Book of Martha", Octavia Butler
	"The Ones Who Stay and Fight", N.K. Jemisin
	Octavia Butler, "The Monophobic Response"
Th, 3/11	Research Presentations.
F, 3/12	**Research Paper due.**

Week 7:

T, 3/16	Research Presentations.
Th, 3/18	Research Presentations.
	We made it!

* This schedule is a work in progress and subject to approval by the classroom community.