

LEHMAN COLLEGE OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK  
DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

**LEH 301 PO1W / Black Image: from Caricature to Mass-marketing Hip Hop**

Stacey Williams

Spring 2007 CA 332

M 2:00 – 4:30

email: stayy @ hotmail.com

Office: CA 291 MW 11:00 -12:00

or by appointment

Tel: 863 242 8916

**COURSE DESCRIPTION** This course explores the history of reproduced portraits : from 19<sup>th</sup>-century caricatures of Africans in illustrated books to images of colored servitude in advertising. The course will look at early studio postcards and anthropological photography that documented subjects' physical as well as scientific racial uniqueness. Around 1900, the W.E.B. DuBois' Negro Exposition displayed photographs of the Negro middle class and subsequent race films directed and marketed by blacks showed a rescued the dignity of the popular black image. Marketing of the New Negro in black newspapers and magazines continued during: the Harlem Renaissance, Garveyism, and black is beautiful movements to humanize and document black life for a global market. Questions of how the black image has survived in present versions including grass roots and Hollywood Blaxploitation of the 70s up until hip hop's racially and sexually explicit videos will be examined in depth. For example, studying creative environments in which these images were created will do this. Also included is the study of music, literature, theater, fashion, as well as, political trends in which any and all black images are integral.

**COURSE FORMAT** Lectures, readings, films/videotapes, on-line databases, and class writings will draw on oral and literary history, including anthropological and art history perspectives to better experience and understand marketing approaches and the critical reception.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS** Regular class attendance is mandatory. More than four unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade. ALL STUDENTS are expected to come to class and or field trips prepared by having read all assignments in advance, by having written response based on weekly readings, and by preparing presentations for class meeting.

**GRADING**

A final grade is based on an average of the scores below = 1000 points:

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|----------------------------|------------|
| 1. 10 homework assignments | 200 points |
| 2. 1 in class presentation | 100 points |
| 3. Class participation     | 100 points |
| 3. Midterm examination     | 300 points |
| 4. Final examination       | 300 points |

**REQUIRED TEXTS:** handouts and online articles will be assigned weekly. Students are expected to read and summarize readings for discussion and presentation.

**COURSE OUTLINE : 6 thematic sections. Class colleagues should feel free to suggest and bring in any and all relevant media and topics.**

**Jim Crow topics:** viewing and discussing images of actual African American culture: encoded quilts, early marketing of abolitionists images and speeches by Douglass and Truth leads to Harvard photographic study of enslaved and other anthropological images of Venus Hottentots. Blackface minstrelsy and the Ku Klux Klan in photos and Birth of a Nation history are also examined also with clips from Spike Lee's Bamboozled.

**The Close-up** Oscar Micheaux's and King Vidor's images in Within Our Gates and Hallelujah (1929). Two films depict a split in rural vs. urban black life as did DuBois and Washington. Effect of the close-up shot and the black hero also recaptured famously in Park's Shaft will be discussed.

**Music Mania** and the black film character: Robeson's Emperor Jones, Waters' Cabin in the Sky, Calloway's Hi De Ho and Prince's Purple Rain are key musicals with undeniable stars whose musical talents are also portrayed as problematic. Collecting African Americana and a discussion of black gender stereotypes in them and black soldiers in WWI, WWII, the Great Depression, and Desert Storm seems relevant.

**Black Love** looks at the revolutionary romantic pairings in Nothing But A Man, Love of Ivy, Claudine and The Color Purple and Daughters of the Dust.

**Sweetback's Bad Ass Song, Coffy and Superfly.** Blaxploitation topics, such as community and cultural politics will be discussed along side post- Malcolm and Martin topics in Harlem on My Mind exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Spike Lee's Do the Right Thing.

**Mapplthorpe's penis envy and Rigg's Black Is, Black Ain't** and visual culture of the Whitney's Black Male focus on a black eroticism that is out, queer and very close to home. Images made by artists Kara Walker and Mark Bradford's paintings and installations will be explored.

**Universal Black Booty** search for topics that explore sexuality, gender, and art in hip hop music videos, arguably the most widely marketed images of black life and musical culture.

## **IMPORTANT DATES**

**Midterm Practicum**

**Midterm Examination / presentations of student reviews**

**SPRING RECESS NO CLASS**

**Final Practicum**

**Last class/ Final exam presentations**