Course Plan for Black Feminism, Digital Blackface & AI Course

Introduction

The following document proposes a three-unit structure for an undergraduate-level course on Black feminism, blackface, and AI in the digital age. Designed as a 10-week class, this course consists of three units: (1) Black Feminist Epistemology, (2) The History of Blackface Minstrelsy, and (3) Analyzing Digital Blackface and Its Impacts. This progression from theory to history to application equips students with the cultural knowledge and historical context necessary to process AI-generated content through a Black feminist lens.

Each unit plan includes learning objectives, guiding questions, suggested lessons, assessments, and resources to guide lesson planning. For additional teaching materials, including slides and media files, please access this link.

Unit 1 Overview	
Unit Title	Black Feminist Epistemology
Duration	3 weeks, 2 classes per week
Learning Objectives	1. Define and interpret key ideas associated with Black feminism, including matrix of domination, intersectionality, and misogynoir 2. Identify the core tenets of Black Feminist Epistemology (lived experience as a criterion of meaning, the use of dialogue, the ethic of personal accountability, and the ethics of caring) and articulate its differences from Western Epistemology 3. Apply the practices of Black Feminist Epistemology in a cultural analysis paper
Guiding Questions	1. What is Black feminism? Who are its primary thinkers, what is its history, and what are its core beliefs? 2. Why is Black feminism necessary and what does it have the capacity to address that other feminisms do not? 3. What are the core tenets of Black Feminist Epistemology? How do these tenets better capture the lived experiences of Black women? 4. How do intersectionality and misogynoir uniquely address Black women's experiences of both racism and sexism? 5. How does popular media spread and normalize misogynoir?

Lessons	
Lesson 1	**Introduction: Black Feminism**
Lesson 2	**What is Black Feminist Epistemology? Part I**
Lesson 3	**What is Black Feminist Epistemology? Part II**
Lesson 4	**Intersectionality, Defined**
Lesson 5	**What is Misogynoir? Part I**
Lesson 6	**What is Misogynoir? Part II**
Assessments	
Formative Assessments	**Journal Responses** To foster deep reflection on course materials and discussions, students will start each class with a free write, responding to the assigned reading and/or a prompt related to the lecture. These journals may also serve as a repository for students' brainstorming and drafting for the summative assignment. **Shared Lexicon** Students will collaborate on a shared document listing all relevant key terms, their definitions, and citations. Having a shared vocabulary will ensure their retention of theoretical ideas throughout the course.
Summative Assessment	**Cultural Analysis Paper** As the final assignment, students will select and analyze a cultural artifact using a Black Feminist Epistemological approach. Students will identify an illustrative example of either intersectionality or misogynoir in media and then analyze it using at least one tenet of Black Feminist Epistemology. This paper will require a reflective cover sheet where students must outline how exactly they used Black Feminist Epistemology to inform their writing.

Resources
Bailey, Moya. *Misogynoir Transformed: Black Women's Digital Resistance*. New York University Press, 2021. The Combahee River Collective. "The Combahee River Collective Statement." April 1977. https://americanstudies.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Keyword%20Coalition_Readings.pdf. Collins, Patricia Hill. "Black Feminist Epistemology." In *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd ed. Routledge, 2000. Crenshaw, Kimberlé. *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color*. 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99.
Additional Teaching Materials
Black Feminist Epistemology Worksheet

Unit 2 Overview	
Unit Title	The History of Blackface Minstrelsy
Duration	3 weeks, 2 classes per week
Learning Objectives	1. Understand the history and legacy of blackface minstrelsy in American popular culture 2. Define and recognize the most prevalent controlling images (Mammy, Matriarch, Jezebel, Sapphire) and their material effects on Black women 3. Conduct independent research on a controlling image in popular culture and argue a claim about their significance in a paper
Guiding Questions	1. What is the history, purpose, and impact of blackface minstrelsy? How does its legacy still inform public perceptions of Black women today?

	2. What are the primary controlling images? How does each one reinforce damaging narratives about Black women and justify their oppression? 3. How and for what reasons have controlling images changed over time? What material impact have these stereotypes had on Black women? 4. In what ways do these controlling images perpetuate misogynoir and commodify Black female identity? 5. What is the current presence and impact of controlling images in popular media?
Lessons	
Lesson 1	**Introduction: Blackface Minstrelsy**
Lesson 2	**Controlling Images, An Overview**
Lesson 3	**Controlling Images: The Mammy**
Lesson 4	**Controlling Images: The Matriarch**
Lesson 5	**Controlling Images: The Jezebel**
Lesson 6	**Controlling Images: The Sapphire**
Assessments	
Formative Assessments	**Journal Reflections** **Shared Lexicon** **5-Minute In-Class Analysis** Each student will be assigned a piece of memorabilia from the Jim Crow Museum's website and identify which controlling image it depicts. In this brief exercise, they will analyze how visual elements correlate to a specific controlling image and what narrative about Black women this memorabilia constructs
Summative Assessment	**Research Paper** Students will research a controlling image of their choosing and analyze 1-2 examples of it in popular culture. They will develop a claim about the controlling image that explicitly connects its representation to a real-world political, social, economic, psychological, etc., impact. The key purpose of

	this paper is for students to practice recognizing the influence of media representation on Black women's lives.

Resources

Collins, Patricia Hill. "Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images." In *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd ed. Routledge, 2000.

Lott, Eric. *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*. 20th Anniversary. Race and American Culture. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Pilgrim, David. "The Jezebel Stereotype - Anti-Black Imagery - Jim Crow Museum." Jim Crow Museum, 2024 2002. https://jimcrowmuseum.ferris.edu/jezebel/index.htm.

Wallace-Sanders, Kimberly. *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory*. University of Michigan Press, 2009.

Additional Teaching Materials

Controlling Images Slides

Unit 3 Overview	
Unit Title	Analyzing Digital Blackface & Its Impacts
Duration	3 weeks, 2 classes per week
Learning Objectives	1. Connect digital blackface to blackface minstrelsy, misogynoir, and controlling images 2. Sharpen AI literacy skills through the pracrtice of identifying AI-generated content 3. Apply cultural and media analysis, research skills, and Black feminism to their interpretation of synthetic or AI-generated media 4. Explore current ethical questions regarding the use of generative AI through a Black feminist lens

Guiding Questions	1. What is digital blackface? How does it continue and reinvent blackface minstrelsy? 2. How do synthetic or AI-generated videos perpetuate misogynoir and at what scale? 3. What specific challenges does synthetic media pose to Black women's self-definition and identity? 4. How does synthetic content further commodify Black women for mass consumption? 5. What ethical questions are raised by the generation of Black AI avatars and influencers?
Lessons	
Lesson 1	**Introduction: Digital Blackface**
Lesson 2	**AI Literacy 101: How to Identify AI-Generated Content**
Lesson 3	**The Rise & Fall of Sora 2**
Lesson 4	**Digital Blackface, AI Slop, and Dropshipping Scams**
Lesson 5	**AI Influencers & Blackness as Entertainment**
Lesson 6	**Final Presentations**
Assessments	
Formative Assessments	**Journal Reflections** **Shared Lexicon**
Summative Assessment	**Final Presentation** For the culminating assessment of this course, students will work in groups and present on the AI-generated media of their choosing that uses digital blackface to portray a Black woman. In their presentation, they must complete three actions: (1) explain the media's origin and use of artificial intelligence, (2) identify signs of the content's fabrication, and (3) analyze the media's use of digital blackface, to what extent it reinforces misogynoir, and its broader implications for Black women. This summative assessment's design requires students to synthesize theory, history, and application in one project, demonstrating their command of Black feminist practices.

Resources

Carrasco, Jeremy. “The Best Way to Spot AI Is Also the Easiest.” Riddance, February 12, 2026. https://substack.riddance.ai/p/the-best-way-to-spot-ai-is-also-the.

Jackson, Lauren Michele. “We Need to Talk About Digital Blackface in GIFs.” Teen Vogue, August 2, 2017. https://www.teenvogue.com/story/digital-blackface-reaction-gifs.

Kung, Jess, B. A. Parker, and Leah Donnella, hosts. *The Evolution of Blackface in the Age of AI*. Code Switch. NPR, December 13, 2025. 15:58. https://www.npr.org/2025/12/13/nx-s1-5611061/the-evolution-of-blackface-in-the-age-of-ai.

Myers, Steven Lee, and Stuart A. Thompson. “A.I. Videos Have Flooded Social Media. No One Was Ready.” Technology. *The New York Times*, December 8, 2025. https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/08/technology/ai-slop-sora-social-media.html.

Sora Team. “Sora 2 Is Here.” OpenAI, September 30, 2025. https://openai.com/index/sora-2/.

For advanced undergraduates:

Davis, Cienna. “Angry Black Femmes and the Affective Economy of Digital Blackface.” *Communication, Culture and Critique* 19, no. 2 (2026): 153–61. https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcag009.

Media List (Sample Content for In-Class Analysis)

Carrasco, Jeremy (@jeremyfindsai). “Have you seen these AI black women accounts?” Instagram video, March 21, 2026

Original URL: https://www.instagram.com/reel/DWK3H7jgFCq/?xtok=MXI5OWUzMXhpaXR1eQ%3D%3D
Archive Record: https://archive.ph/Oj7Xv
Teaching File: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VtwENgea8uvMBvdExz1lSP5saoQe4pv2/view?usp=drive_link

Hayes, Isaac III (@isaachayes3). "OpenAI’s SORA 2 continues to let videos be made that mock and disrespect Black people." Instagram video, November 2, 2025.

Original URL: https://www.instagram.com/isaachayes3/reel/DQk8uQWDI8_/
Archive Record: https://archive.ph/c4h3x
Teaching File: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VFSxNrNqSb8n5F4mdq276Iruco2RgFFE/view?usp=drive_link

(@Holixhoods). “Shop now - link in bio.” Tiktok video, March 26, 2026.

Original URL: https://www.tiktok.com/@shopholix_com/video/7621476626873748758
Archive Record: /web/20261102001322/https://www.tiktok.com/@shopholix_com/video/7621476626873748758?_r=1&_t=ZP-9B3T9jHLFHz

Teaching File:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/139qDDOLJVMnPh0NoPFAuozy32p7_pQCd/view?usp=drive_link

@LinaArtMj. “MJ fans, what do you think of my lamps?” TikTok video, May 22, 2026
Original URL: https://www.tiktok.com/@linaartmj/video/7642875638126218526?lang=en
Archive Record:
/web/20261102000952/https://www.tiktok.com/@linaartmj/video/7642875638126218526?_r=1&_t=ZP-9B3SkwGb08M
Teaching File:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/16oHDx1_jU1YMOm-m6VHFgk8n269oNt2o/view?usp=drive_link

Additional Teaching Materials

Detecting AI Card Sort (Source: Vanderbilt University)

Mapping Controlling Images onto Synthetic Media Worksheet