

#BERKSSYLLABUS2020

HISTORIES OF WOMEN, GENDERS, AND SEXUALITIES:

A COLLABORATIVE SYLLABUS

Johns Hopkins University History Department

Spring 2020

We met as a graduate seminar on the History of Women, Genders, and Sexualities at Johns Hopkins University in spring 2020. Our collaborative syllabus that anticipated the panels we would later attend during the #BigBerks2020. We began by reviewing the program to appreciate all the elements that go into creating a Big Berks meeting on the histories of women, genders, and sexualities. *Shout out to the Program Committee for creating such an inspiring program.* Then we read the panel descriptions and abstracts and each selected a panel, roundtable or single paper for that would anchor our seminar meetings. *Thanks to everyone on the program – it was difficult to choose just a few from so many excellent happenings.* For each week, we selected additional readings that illustrated the questions, themes and problematics of the panel. Our aim was to think hard about the panels, prepare with relevant readings, and attend the live meeting with good questions.

We did not expect that we'd be sharing this syllabus with the Berks community. But when the meeting was cancelled, we realized that our work together as a seminar was as close as we would get to the May 2020 conference experience. And we were even more grateful for having taken time to "attend" the meeting in another way. Here, we are sharing for the first time a glimpse of our seminar meetings. Perhaps you'll find something here that will guide your own reading. Or maybe you'll dive into the program and, from it, create your own syllabus. We are sorry to miss the chance to be together, but hope that this window into how we

spent spring 2020 – in person and virtually – brings you closer to the heart of the Berkshire Conference.

Martha S. Jones

Halle-Mackenzie Ashby

Olivia Barnard

Magdalene Klassen

Kelsey Moore

Elena Palazzolo

Alex Parry

Malaurie Pilatte

Gregory Smaldone

Christina Thomas

Julia Wu

Baltimore, Maryland. May 22, 2020

WEEK 1

BLACK FEMINISTS GEOGRAPHIES: THE GEOGRAPHIC AND POLITICAL DIASPORA OF COMBAHEE

LEADER: KELSEY MOORE

In 1979, the Combahee River Collective mobilized with other community members and organizations around the epidemic of murders of women--twelve black and one white-- in Boston. Combahee condemned the state and the public's lack of response to the murders and their failure to recognize the value of these black women and girls' lives, and they asserted that women and girls have the right to be free from violence in the privacy of their own homes and to travel safely throughout the public sphere.

Drawing from Combahee's assertions, this panel considers the ways in which black women have made claims upon their respective spaces in the period from 1967 to the present. Black women's political organizing has long constructed creative, conceptual, and material geographies throughout the Americas. From the east coast to the Caribbean, Black feminists negotiate their geographic contexts as sites of struggle, making claims for institutional and legal recognition in social and political environments that enable their exclusion, marginalization, and death. Using interdisciplinary approaches that incorporate concerns from black feminist thought, geography, visual culture, social history, and ethnography, we engage these critical historical actors in Black social and political movements in ways that speak to the notions of private and domestic, legal (in)visibility and social vulnerability, and embodied and spatial agency.

Chair

[Lakisha Michelle Simmons](#), University of Michigan.

Panelists

[Jallicia Jolly](#), University of Michigan. "Hemispheric HerStories: Black Feminist Geographies of Reproductive Justice Activism in the US and Jamaica."

[Mary McNeil](#), Harvard University. "Mothers for Adequate Welfare and the Creation of New Political Geographies through the Seizure of Public Space."

[Michelle May-Curry](#), University of Michigan, "Of House and Home: Domestic (Re)Visions of Mildred Loving."

[Eshe Sherley](#), University of Michigan. "The Many Meanings of "Maid's Honor": The National Domestic Workers Union and the Reshaping of Atlanta Politics, 1968-1973."

Reading

Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

[Combahee River Collective Statement](#)

WEEK 2

MORE THAN MATERNALISM: RETHINKING WOMEN'S REFORM IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

LEADER: ALEX PARRY

Historians largely agree that women's political activism in the progressive era was characterized by “maternalism,” an amorphous ideology that linked women's private roles as mothers and caretakers to the public arena of social reform. Scholars have demonstrated how reformers engaged in “municipal housekeeping” to clean up gilded-age cities; demanded their right to vote as the mothers of future citizens; and laid the groundwork for a caregiving welfare state. The foundational scholarship on maternalism by historians like Paula Baker and Maureen Flanagan continues to shape how historians understand the motivations and strategies of reformist women near the turn of the twentieth century. But as historian Elizabeth Israels Perry argues, scholars’ liberal use of “maternalism” has flattened some of the complexities of women’s progressive-era activism. At worst, this framework can reinforce gender stereotypes by suggesting women-led reform movements were dictated by an innate desire to nurture families and protect children.

This panel features new research on the history of women's progressive-era reform that contradicts, complicates, and deepens the traditional maternalist framework. Respectively, these papers examine why a group of women reformed public schools in Chicago to prepare girls for motherhood and homemaking; how lived experiences with alcoholism and violence among members of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union shaped their “home protection” activism; and how local agents engaged with real children in state programs funded through the Sheppard-Towner Act. Together, these papers encourage historians to reassess what motivated maternalist campaigns by drawing attention to individual women on the local level.

Chair and Comment

[Robyn Muncy](#), University of Maryland.

Panelists

[Michelle Bezark](#), Northwestern University. "'A Bill for Better Babies': The Sheppard-Towner Act and Nationalizing the American Child."

[Ruby Oram](#), Loyola University Chicago. "'The New Homemakers': Educating Chicago Girls for Modern Motherhood, 1890-1915."

[Ella Wagner](#), Loyola University Chicago. "'Home Protection,' Lived Experience, and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1874-1898."s

Reading

Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare and the State, 1890-1930* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

WEEK 3

TROUBLING TERMS AND THE SEX TRADE

LEADER: MAGDALENE KLASSEN

Prostitution, sex work, trafficking, and decriminalization are not only contentious feminist issues, but contentious words with important and complex histories and cultural contexts. This session explores the 'troubling terms' associated with female sexual labor and exploitation through a historical, interdisciplinary, and feminist lens to interrogate the genealogy and political work of 'sex work', 'trafficking and modern slavery', and 'decriminalization'. Our intention is to pair this session with a submission by others for a 'lighting round' on the history of women's migrant and sexual labor that will complement our explorations of these terms across times and places with in-depth case studies around the world in the twentieth century.

Participants in this panel approach female sexual labor from a range of situated knowledge: some are scholars of transactional or commercial sex, one is a practitioner of sex work and a theorist, two are artists, two are scholar activists. Some have transnational interests, others have worked deeply on localized politics and research.

Organizer

[Judith R. Walkowitz](#), Johns Hopkins University.

Chair

[Rachel Schreiber](#), Parsons School of Design at the New School.

Panelists

[Carol Leigh, BaySWAN](#). "Sex Work."

[Judith R. Walkowitz](#), Johns Hopkins University. "Sex Work."

[Julia Laité](#), Birkbeck College, University of London. "Sex Trafficking."

[Eurydice Aroney](#), University of Technology, Sydney. "Decriminalization."

Reading

Val Marie Johnson, "'Look for the Moral and Sex Sides of the Problem': Investigating Jewishness, Desire, and Discipline at Macy's Department Store, New York City, 1913." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18, no. 3 (2009): 457-485.

June Mac and Molly Smith, *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Workers' Rights* (New York: Verso, 2019).

WEEK 4

SEX, VIOLENCE AND ENSLAVED WOMEN'S EMOTIONAL WEAPONS

LEADER: GREGORY SMALDONE

Enslaved women across the world used their agency and emotional power to manipulate or motivate themselves and others to mitigate the violence of their experiences. Each member of the panel is following in the wake of scholars such as Marisa Fuentes and Sowande Mustakeem while using emotional methodologies to shed new light on the weaponizing of grief, anger, and fear. While these emotional tools have been described as “weapons of the weak”, our reading of the documents suggests that enslaved women deployed these emotions for more than survival. Our respondent is wrestling with similar methodological questions about sexual violence and emotions in her work on the history of women in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The intention of the panel is to create a conversation that examines the different and similar experiences and approaches to the history of African and African-descended enslaved women in the archives.

Chair and Comment

[Laura Rosanne Adderley](#), Tulane University.

Panelists

[Sasha Turner](#), Johns Hopkins University. “On the Terrain of Feelings: Sympathy, Slavery, and Motherhood.”

[Erin Dwyer](#), Oakland University. ““A Woman’s Weapon”: The Emotional, Sexual, and Gendered Politics of Enslaved Poisoners in the Atlantic World.”

[Elisabeth McMahan](#), Tulane University. “Fear, Violence, and Women in the Nineteenth Century East African Slave Trade.”

Reading

Sowande' M. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (University of Illinois Press, 2016).

Marissa Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

WEEK 5

'THE WAR IS NOT OVER YET': TRAUMA AND DISABILITY INDUCED BY JAPANESE WARTIME SEXUAL VIOLENCE

LEADER: JULIA WU

This presentation critically examines Japanese imperialism from the angle of trauma and disability produced by wartime sexual violence. Alongside modern empires such as Britain and France, Japan grew to be among the most powerful and largest empires in the modern world. Systematic and large-scale sexual violence ordered and sanctioned by the imperial government was a definitive feature of Japan's empire. While there is a rich literature on suffering and pain caused by Japan's empire, analyses of trauma from the lens of gender are scarce, leading to the phenomenon of what I call the invisibility of disabled women and sexual trauma. The disabling effects of Japanese imperialism are often embodied in male veterans, and there is hardly any mention of disabled women. However, testimony from female survivors of Japanese wartime sexual violence has clearly shown that they are left with everlasting mental and physical scars.

Analyzing the testimony survivors of Japanese wartime sexual violence from the lens of feminist disability studies and trauma studies, my presentation raises and seeks to answer the following questions: what are the long-term impacts of wartime sexual violence on survivors' physical and mental wellbeing? How does a feminist analysis of trauma and disability offer a fresh perspective on the entanglement of imperialism, capitalism, and sexism, which constantly puts women's physical and mental wellbeing at risk? While the focus of my presentation is on Japan's empire, it has a wide theoretical implication by proposing a feminist, decolonizing, and anti-ableist way of understanding trauma and disability.

Single Paper

[Lin Li](#), University of Wisconsin-Madison. "'The War is Not Over Yet': Trauma and Disability Induced by Japanese Wartime Sexual Violence."

Reading

Maki Kimura, *Unfolding the 'Comfort Women' Debates : Modernity, Violence, Women's Voices* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK : Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

Linda Isako Angst, "The Rape of a Schoolgirl: Discourses of Power and Gendered National Identity in Okinawa," *Islands of Discontent: Okinawan Responses to Japanese and American Power*, ed. Laura Hein and Mark Selden (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003): 135-157.

WEEK 6

PARTIES, PLAY AND PLEASURE: BLACK WOMEN AND THE POLITICS OF EMBODIED ACTIVISM IN THE 20TH CENTURY

LEADER: MALAURIE PILATTE

This roundtable seeks to explore the history of Black women's embodied activism in multiple and occasionally intersecting sites. The panelists will examine Black women's historical attempts to navigate gendered violence and racial terror while also constructing lives full of pleasure, play and joy. Black women's bodies were often fraught sites of both projected pathologies and aspirations of racial uplift. However this panel centers Black women's own ideas about their bodies and the possibilities they contain. By tracing Black women's use of fitness, fashion, play and consumption this roundtable introduces new frameworks for considering Black women's bodies, their politics and their activism.

Moderator

[Marcia Chatelain](#), Georgetown University.

Panelists

[Ava Purkiss](#), University of Michigan. "How to care for their bodies": Black Women's Exercise, Self-Care, and Pleasure, 1890-1940s."

[Tanisha Ford](#), CUNY Graduate Center. "The Glamorous Life and Black Women's Embodied Activism."

[Amira Rose Davis](#), Penn State University. "To Stomp, Shake and Agitate: Black Cheerleaders and Protest in the Mid-Twentieth Century."

Reading

Tanisha Ford, *Liberated Threads, Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Soul* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

Treva B. Lindsey and Jessica Marie Johnson, "Searching for Climax: Black Erotic Lives in Slavery and Freedom," *Meridians* 12, no. 2 (2014): 169-195.

WEEK 7

INTERROGATING THE VISUAL ARCHIVE OF SLAVERY: ENSLAVED WOMEN IN ART, MUSEUMS, AND MEMORIALS

LEADER: OLIVIA BARNARD

Over the last thirty years, all over the Atlantic world, slavery and the Atlantic slave trade have been memorialized through initiatives such as monuments, memorials, festivals, and museum exhibitions. Whereas several of these ventures emphasized the representation of enslaved men, especially abolitionists and slave fighters, very few projects highlighted the crucial roles of enslaved women during slavery. This panel seeks to understand how enslaved women have been historically represented in visual images, monuments, memorials, and museum exhibitions. By focusing on Brazil and the United States, the various papers explore representations in which enslaved women appear as fighters, mothers, wet nurses, but rarely as sexually abused individuals. By exploring these representations, the four papers in this panel argue and contest the formation of the visual slavery archive and show artists, curators, and exhibition designers had either reinforced traditional depictions of enslaved women or contested these representations. The papers also argue that these representations of enslaved women speak to the present-day conditions of black women's social exclusion in former slave societies.

Chair

[Kate McMahon](#), National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Panelists

[Renée Ater](#), University of Maryland. "Embodying Harriet Tubman in the Natural World."

[Ana Lucia Araujo](#), Howard University. "In the Shadows of Slavery: Visualizing Sally Hemings in the Museum."

[Kimberly Cleveland](#), Georgia State University. "Monumentalizing the Black Wet Nurse and the Mammy: Movements to Honor Female Slaves in Brazil and the United States."

[Isabel Lofgren](#), Södertörn University and Patricia Gouvea. "Ways of Seeing Black Motherhood in Slavery Archives in Brazil: Mãe Preta, An Exhibition and Artistic Research Project."

Reading

On Brazil

Ana Lucia Araujo, "[The Death of Brazil's National Museum](#)," *American Historical Review* 124, no. 2 (April 2019): 569-580.

Kimberly Cleveland, "Not Your Mother's Milk: Imagining the Wet Nurse in Brazil," in ed., Hilary Owen and Anna M. Klobucka, *Gender, Empire, and Postcolony: Luso-Afro-Brazilian Intersections* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014): 127-140.

Mãe Preta: <http://www.maepreta.net/in-english/>

On the United States

Allison Parker, "White Women Monument to Black "Mammies" *New York Times*, February 6, 2020.

Mary Church Terrell, "The Black Mammy Monument [1923,]" *Mary Church Terrell Papers: Speeches and Writings, 1866-1953*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

PANEL 8

ANNE MOODY'S COMING OF AGE AND BEYOND: THE ASTONISHING INFLUENCE OF AN ELUSIVE CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST IN THE LONG CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

LEADER: CHRISTINA THOMAS

Anne Moody's autobiography, *Coming of Age in Mississippi: The Classic Autobiography of Growing Up Poor and Black in the Rural South* (Dial, 1968) has been a staple in U.S. history classes since its original publication date fifty years ago. It stands alone in its ability to convey something of how black Mississippians—through the eyes and voice of one young girl—experienced racial violence, discrimination, and segregation in the postwar South. Until now, Moody's story has ended in Mississippi in 1964. This panel takes *Coming of Age* as its starting point and expands outward. Roscoe Barnes' paper, "Bringing Her Home," explores ways of using public history and journalism to revive local—and even national—interest in and knowledge about an all-but-forgotten historical figure and thereby preserve her legacy and extend her influence. Shelby Driskill uses Moody's later reflections on a "movement tree," to understand her earlier frustrations with nonviolent resistance, subsequent claims that the Civil Rights Movement died in 1964, and steadfast refusal to give up on the promise of racial equality. Finally, Leigh Ann Wheeler's paper explores Anne Moody's influence abroad by tracing foreign editions and reviews of *Coming of Age*, speeches Moody delivered to international audiences, and CIA surveillance of—and interference with—her work. By presenting many-faceted accounts of Anne Moody's life and legacy, these papers will appeal to a broad and diverse audience, including *Coming of Age* fans, civil rights scholars, public history enthusiasts, as well as attendees interested in autobiography, resistance, and memory.

Chair

[Sara Evans](#), University of Minnesota.

Comment

[Anastasia Curwood](#), University of Kentucky.

Panelists

[Roscoe Barnes, III](#). "Bringing Her Home: Commemorating Anne Moody in Southern Public Culture."

[Shelby Driskill](#), University of Richmond. "In the Shadow of the "Movement Tree": Anne Moody, the Long Civil Rights Movement, and Interrogations of Race and Resistance."

[Leigh Ann Wheeler](#), Binghamton University. "Anne Moody's Global Citizenship During the Cold War."

Reading

Excerpts from *Coming of Age in Mississippi*:

[Chapter 10-11](#)

[Sit-Ins Part IV; Chapter 26—The Movement](#)

[Ending Paragraph](#)

Oral Interview with Anne Moody: [Oral Interview](#)

Jane Duran, "[Anne Moody and the Mississippi Life: A Tale of the Civil Rights Era](#)", Jane Duran, *Peace Research* 46, no. 2 (2014): 113-125.

Explore: [Discover Anne Moody](#)

WEEK 9
FREEDOM IN DEGREES: BLACK WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF EMANCIPATION IN THE
AMERICAS

LEADER: HALLE-MACKENZIE ASHBY

The speakers in this lightning session are all contributors to a planned collection about women who were agents of freedom in the African diaspora. Using a biographical approach, the panelists will focus on the life history of an individual woman who was born during slavery or immediately after emancipation, using her experiences as a lens through which the larger meanings and contingent nature of freedom for women of African descent in the Americas might be revealed. The presenters will discuss the varied ways – including entrepreneurship, witchcraft, literary artistry, activism, and insurrection – that these women sought to carve out and maintain their freedom in the Americas. In the process, we seek to reveal connections between black women's experiences of enslavement and emancipation, to highlight patterns in their forms of activism and resistance across imperial, national, and regional boundaries, to historicize the relationship between the personal and the political in women's experiences across the African diaspora, and, finally, to explore the politics of historical memory. Ultimately, we seek to open up a larger discussion about women's relationship to freedom and to create a space for scholars to reflect on the possibilities and limitations contained in archives of slavery and emancipation in the Americas.

Moderator

[Erica Louise Bell](#), Occidental College.

Comment

[Tatiana Seijas](#), Rutgers University.

Presenters

[Terri L. Snyder](#), California State University, Fullerton. "Women Claiming Freedom."

[Sophie White](#), University of Notre Dame. “Marion.”

[Sabrina Smith](#), University of California, Merced. “Juana Ramirez.”

[Kellie Carter Jackson](#), Wellesley College. “‘I was a Girl Full of Smartness:’ The Life of Mary Ellen Pleasant.”

[Maria Helena Machado](#), University of São Paulo. “Maria Firmina dos Reis: A Pioneering Afro-Brazilian Writer Fighting Against Slavery.”

[Jacqueline Couti](#), Rice University. “Lumina Sophie.”

Reading

Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World, ed., Pamela Scully and Diana Paton (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

WEEK 10

SEXUAL APPETITES: FOOD AND SEXUALITY IN AMERICA

LEADER: ELENA PALAZZOLO

Long before texters used eggplant and peach emojis to sext, food has been intertwined with ideas and practices of sexuality. As the theme of this conference attests, scholars have increasingly emphasized environments and foodways in their scholarship, but they have not adequately addressed the ways that sexuality has been implicated in the production and consumption of food, nor the importance of food in our understandings and practices of sexuality. In papers that span four centuries, this panel explores the sexuality of food consumption and production in America and the ways in which food has fed ideas and practices of sexuality. American societies understood eating and producing certain foods to influence reproduction and the production of sexual appetites, but those foods and appetites varied widely across America. This panel seeks to answer the questions: How does a focus on food change the way that we understand sexual practices? How has the production and consumption of food sexualized particular races, classes, and genders? What continuities characterize American understandings of food and sexuality, and what understandings are particular to specific eras and societies?

Chair and Comment

[Helen Zoe Veit](#), Michigan State University

Panelists

[Michaela Kleber](#), College of William & Mary. “I Know that you have a taste for men; I made you a feast, take your fill”: Indigenous Sexuality and Food in Early America.”

[Rachel Hope Cleves](#), University of Victoria. “Sex and Cookbooks: A Twentieth Century History.”

[Patrick O'Neil](#), Methodist University. ""The Paraphernalia of Non-Essentials:" Cake, Sex, and Sentiment in Antebellum Weddings."

Reading

Robert J. Gambles, "[Sex & Food in the Nineteenth-Century American Metropolis](#)," *Notches*, October 1, 2015.

Psyche Williams-Forsion, *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, and Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).