ENG 697.01W/GDRS 597.01W: bell hooks & Feminist Rhetorics

Summer II 2024

COURSE SYLLABUS

Instructor: Dr. Ashanka Kumari (she/her/hers)
Office Location: David Talbot Hall 225
Office Hours: Email or make an appointment via tidycal.com/ashanka
Email (preferred communication mode): ashanka.kumari@tamuc.edu
**Communication Response Time**: 24 business hours

COURSE INFORMATION

"Imagine living in a world where there is no domination, where females and males are not alike or even always equal, but where a vision of mutuality is the ethos shaping our interaction. Imagine living in a world where we can all be who we are, a world of peace and possibility. Feminist revolution alone will not create such a world; we need to end racism, class elitism, imperialism. But it will make it possible for us to be fully self-actualized females and male able to create beloved community, to live together realizing our dreams of freedom and justice, living the truth that we are all 'created equal.' Come closer. See how feminism can touch and change your life and all our lives. Come closer and know first-hand what feminist movement is all about. Come closer and you will see: feminism is for everybody."

—bell hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*

In this class, we'll be reading and engaging with some of the works and legacy of prolific feminist writer, thinker, teacher, activist, and cultural critic, bell hooks. I can't begin to sum up the impact of bell hooks' work, and we will only scratch the surface of her numerous writings over the next five weeks. However, I envision this class as a moment to reflect on our work as writers, teachers, and scholars as we visit (or revisit) the words of one of the most influential intellectuals of the 20th and 21st century.

Required Texts & Materials

- *Feminism is for Everybody* by bell hooks
- *Ain't I A Woman* by bell hooks
- *Teaching to Transgress* by bell hooks
- *All About Love* by bell hooks
- Additional course readings available via our D2L course shell
- A valid, working leomail email address that you check often (everyday)
- At least two storage methods such as cloud storage, flash drive, folder, etc.
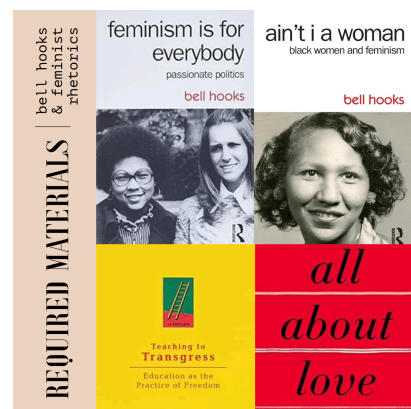
Student Learning Outcomes

Through a mix of reading, writing, and discussion over the next five weeks, you will:

- Delve into feminist theory specifically attending to the relationships across race, gender and class;
- Explore the possibilities of education as "the practice of freedom" and engage critical questions about teaching, learning, and how we might deal with racism and sexism in the classroom; and
- Consider the power of love and its influence on how we communicate and engage justice, healing and growth.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

General Overview of Required Work

As a student in this class, expect to read and write every day toward critical reading responses and discussion. You'll get feedback on your ideas and writing from your classmates and me, and you'll have the chance to continue to develop and revise those pieces based on that feedback. All assignments will center on reflecting on and responding to the ideas from the readings by, about, or related to bell hooks and how you might engage these ideas in your own research, teaching, and beyond.

Weekly Deadlines and Expectations

In brief, you'll work through the following each week (details in the Course Schedule):

Course Shell Content	Start by logging onto the course D2L shell each week. Consider the "start of week" to be Mondays. On our course D2L shell, you will find relevant materials to support your learning about the week's content of focus with designated deadlines and writing spaces.
Read & Reflect	Ongoing. You should follow the course schedule of readings and assignments attending to regular, weekly deadlines.
Discussion Posts	Discussion board deadlines will be Thursdays and Sundays. By Thursdays, you should have responded to your classmates' discussion board posts from the previous week; on Week 1, you will just post your own introduction post. By Sundays, you should post a response to the week's readings following the guidelines on D2L.

Example Scenario Model

Imagine it's Friday before Week 2 of the term. You've reviewed the week 1 D2L materials and posted your introduction discussion board post. It's time to work on your primary discussion board post for the week. For week one, your focus is the introductory material as well as hooks' book *Feminism is for Everybody* (2015). These are the steps you might take:

1. Go to the Week 1 content area in our course D2L shell
2. Review the mini schedule and week's checklist posted above or first in the week's content listing

3. Access the readings/texts in whatever way works for you (e.g. picking up a copy of the assigned book, downloading PDFs, click on video links).
4. Read, take notes, annotate on your own
5. Draft your discussion board post about *Feminism is for Everybody* and notes on potential keywords for keyword/theme project by Sunday
6. To stay on track, pick up on the week 2 materials Monday (focus on hooks' *Ain't I A Woman*)
7. Lather, rinse, repeat

While I hope this structure assists with building routines as you acclimate to our online class, I know life happens. On top of the typical challenges, I recognize that many of you might be dealing with technical issues, grief, uncertain childcare, serious viruses and their variants, classes in different formats, financial precarity—and so am I.

So this is what I promise you: I will strive to make each week interactive and useful for you. I expect you to log on regularly, and your participation will be self-assessed in reflection moments. I understand that participation and contribution can look and mean something different to each of us, but ultimately, to do well in this course, you should contribute to discussions, raise questions, respond to classmates, and share insights in ways that keep conversations moving forward in meaningful, generative, and generous ways.

Assessments
- One longer weekly discussion board post (or the equivalent) engaging in summary and reflections on the reading along with thoughts fostering discussion with peers (Sundays)
- Responses to peers' discussion posts (Thursdays, except week 1)
- Keyword/Theme Journal & Project (checkpoints and deadlines on D2L)
- Final reflection project

Grading
I thoroughly believe that grades are technologies of surveillance and control. I never liked grades, and I have always felt they limit the learning process, create nasty habits designed to "get the A," and cause more anxiety than they are worth. However, I also realize that grades are important data points for you—your scholarships, majors, future jobs, and ability to graduate are all tied up in the grades you earn.

To balance my distrust of grades with the requirements and expectations of academic spaces, we will work on a **feedback and revision model**, and we will discuss these expectations together throughout the semester. Regardless, you will receive (a lot of) feedback from me and your peers throughout the semester with the expectation that you use that feedback to continually revise, rethink, and remix your work.

On individual assignments, your work will be marked as FULL CREDIT, HALF CREDIT, NO CREDIT, or EXCUSED in D2L unless otherwise noted. These markers break down as follows:
- **Full Credit**: the assignment was fully completed following the assignment prompt and guidelines and is turned in on time. Strong effort is evident and only minor revisions would be beneficial.

- **Half Credit**: the assignment has incomplete elements and/or the project was not turned in on time. Some effort is evident, but major revisions would be beneficial. *For assignments marked Half Credit, you are encouraged to revise and resubmit toward Full Credit.*
- **No Credit**: project wasn't completed and/or wasn't turned in promptly.
- **Excused**: project is incomplete due to uncontrollable circumstances that you have clearly communicated (within reason) to Dr. Kumari

However, this course is not "gradeless" because I, begrudgingly, have to enter a final course grade. At the end of the semester, I will review your work, my various responses to your work throughout the semester, your attempts to compose something of quality, and your general fortitude and determine a final grade using the standard TAMUC grading scale. You may always meet with me to discuss your progress in the course throughout the semester (though don't expect me to give you a "grade").

ACCESS, NAVIGATION, & RESOURCES

I recognize that our classroom is made up of an array of learners and am happy to make any reasonable accommodations to make sure every student has an equal experience in my class. For example, you may prefer to process information by speaking and listening; or you might feel more capable of participating via individual assignments rather than discussion threads online.

Please talk to me as soon as you can about your individual learning needs and how this course can best accommodate them. If you do not have a documented disability, remember that other support services including the Counseling Center are available to all students. I recognize that disabilities can be visible and invisible, and I am dedicated to ensuring that all students succeed in my courses.

Students with Disabilities—ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

> **Office of Student Disability Resources and Services**
> Texas A&M University-Commerce
> Velma K. Waters Library Rm. 162
> Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
> Fax (903) 468-8148
> Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu
> Website: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Learning Management System (LMS)

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements:
- LMS Requirements
- LMS Browser Support
- Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903-468-6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace (D2L), please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here: Brightspace Support.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. You should have *at least* two storage methods such as a flash drive, cloud storage, folder, etc. to back up all your class materials. You should also have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems such as the local library, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

A Note on Learning

As we pursue learning together, I strive to keep the following guiding principles (inspired by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*):
- Put people first. As we learn human-centered philosophies and methodologies in this course, I hope we practice empathy and be cognizant of how our own realities (day-to-day lives) can be imposed upon others whose lives may differ drastically from ours.

- Stay informed. We will keep ourselves educated about any public health and safety situations and make informed decisions about our personal, social, and professional lives.

- Communicate early and often. Even when we are physically and socially apart, we can remain connected through various communication platforms. Always reach out if you need anything necessary to support your learning and your own well-being.

- Celebrate accomplishments. Any achievements, major or minor, during this time are a testament to your dedication and perseverance. We will enable a culture of celebration in this class. So, feel free to share with me your successes (and failures when you attempt something), and I will acknowledge them however you prefer.

- Take care of yourself. Get enough rest, food, movement, and anything you need to keep you in a positive mood and good health. If you don't feel well, do not force yourself through the coursework. Let me know so we can work out alternatives together.

A&M-Commerce Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding the Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Communication

Communication is a key part of success in this course. With the exception of teaching and scheduled research, service, and administrative obligations, I am available via email (ashanka.kumari@tamuc.edu) weekdays or by appointment (tidycal.com/ashanka) to discuss course-related concerns and questions. I can meet in person or via Zoom. Please note that I may not respond to emails between 8pm and 7am. Please include a proper opening, clear message and subject line, and closing salutation in emails. Here's an example:

To: Professor (English.Instructor@tamuc.edu)

From: Jane Student (jstudent13@leomail.tamuc.edu)

Subject: Jane Student. ENG-570. Office Hours Question.

Good morning Professor [Last Name],

I would like to meet with you to discuss my thesis statement for the rhetorical analysis essay. I cannot make your office hours. Can I set up an appointment? I am available to meet Monday, Wednesday, and Friday after 3:00 p.m.

Thank you,

Jane Smith

Accountabilibuddy: Write down the contact information for one or two other classmates below. If you are absent, contact one of these classmates to ask about what you might have missed, provide one another support—we're all in this together! These classmates might be the first ones you turn to when you are confused, have a question about what's due/when it's due, or are running late to class.

Name	Email Address	Phone Number

Syllabus Change Policy

This syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress or weather, may make it necessary for me to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced immediately.

Grievances

Students who have concerns regarding their courses should first address those concerns with the assigned instructor in order to reach a resolution. Students who are unsatisfied with the outcome of that conversation or have not been able to meet individually with their instructor, whether in-person, by email, by telephone, or by another medium, should then schedule an appointment with the Department Head or Assistant Department Head by completing a Student Grievance Form (available in the main office, Talbot Hall 141). Before an appointment is scheduled, the student must provide clearly documented and explained issues as to why the meeting is being requested. The student must also state when they discussed the issue in person or via phone (not email) with the instructor already. Where applicable, students should also consult [University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.05 ("Student Appeal of Instructor Evaluation")](#).

Respect & Student Conduct

Each class is made up of diverse individuals with a variety of backgrounds and beliefs, so we won't always agree with one another on every issue. You will probably feel uneasy, uncomfortable, or challenged at some point in this class. In fact, those moments can often lead to greater insight and understanding. However, rudeness and insults will not be tolerated. Our classroom should be a respectful space where we all feel comfortable and safe sharing our thoughts, and professionalism and boundaries are very important to me as a professor.

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

Inclusion Policy & Nondiscrimination Notice

Your value as a member of this course and university community at large is vital to me, regardless of social identity factors. While at times, the topic of class discussions, readings, and other activities may take you out of your comfort zone, or even go against your individual perception of the world, you are expected to keep an open mind and evaluate claims based on fact and knowledge, rather than preconceived notions alone. For questions, concerns, and problems related to discrimination based on race, ethnicity, class, nationality, gender identity, sexuality, religion, veteran status, or other social or personal identity factors, please come talk to me.

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Collection of Data for Measuring Institutional Effectiveness
In order to measure the level of compliance with the university's Institutional Effectiveness guidelines, throughout the semester, I will collect some of the ungraded texts you produce. The texts will be part of a portfolio created on your behalf and will be measured to ensure that our program "promotes practices that result in higher student academic achievement; an enhanced student experience; aligned and transparent decisions; and readily available information for improvement, accountability, and accreditation." This is solely an assessment of program effectiveness and in no way affects students' course grades or GPA.

Writing Center
The Writing Center offers writers free, one-on-one assistance. We currently offer 45min, face-to-face or online sessions that writers can book from our website: www.tamuc.edu/writing-center

We welcome all writers, majors, and disciplines—undergraduate and graduate students alike (faculty and staff too!). Research shows that all workers benefit from sharing their work with a focused reader. The Writing Center staff is trained to support writers in any stage of the writing process (from the blank page to polishing sentences), and we work with writers to verbalize writing goals and to stay on track with larger writing projects. We work with any form of writing (academic and nonacademic). The writers with whom we work usually bring projects like important emails, weekly writing assignments, midterm and final essays, and theses and dissertations. Contact us with any questions here: writingcenter@tamuc.edu.

Library
The Velma Waters Library supports the research, learning and teaching interests of students, faculty and staff. Connect with a librarian, explore our research and course guides, and attend workshops.
- Chat with a Librarian! Get immediate assistance with our chat service on the main Library page: https://www.tamuc.edu/library/
- Email ask@tamuc.libanswers.com. We will respond to your email within 24 hours, often much sooner.
- Text your question to 903.225.2862.
- Call the Waters Library at 903.886.5718 or contact the librarian for your college/department to discuss your research needs.
- Meet With Us! Don't stay up all night searching Google. Schedule a one-on-one consultation held in-person or via Zoom with the librarian for your college/academic department.
- Visit Us! We'd love to meet you in-person!
    - Waters Library Research Office: Second Floor, Room 213
    - Waters Library University Archives: 4th Floor, Room 406A
    - A&M-Commerce at Mesquite Metroplex Center: Second Floor, Study Room

Academic Integrity & Honesty
Here is the official word on plagiarism and academic integrity from TAMUC:

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:
[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)
[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10](#)

Basically, plagiarism is any attempt to pass off someone else's words or ideas as your own, but also not giving credit where credit is due. As your instructor, I want to know YOUR thoughts, YOUR ideas, and what YOU have to say—and it doesn't have to be perfect the first time. If you are struggling with an assignment, please come talk to me, and I will help you in any way that I can. Plagiarism is not worth the risk.

TurnItIn
I promise to never use turnitin.com or other proprietary tools like it because these programs make money off your work without compensating you. Here's how it works: A university pays turinit.com for its services (with your tuition dollars). Teachers place student papers in the program's "bank," and the program compares that paper with other papers existing in the bank. At that point, the student's paper becomes part of the bank. Therefore, turnitin.com and other tools are making money from this bank full of papers written by uncompensated students. For more information on this issue, see this article from the journal *Hybrid Pedagogy*: https://hybridpedagogy.org/resisting-edtech/.

AI use in course
I anticipate that Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be a topic of conversation this semester, and you may even choose to research it or use it to enhance your own writing process. I highly suggest that you carefully consider the ethical and privacy implications of employing any kind of composing or AI-generative technology. You should *absolutely never* input the intellectual property of others into any AI system without expressed permission; that is, do not input course readings or other materials into AI. I'm happy to discuss further if needed.

Here's the University's policy (as of August 2023) regarding AI:
Texas A&M University-Commerce acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course. Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism). Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructor's guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed. In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

[Texas Senate Bill 17](#)

The recent law that outlaws diversity, equity, and inclusion programs at public colleges and universities in Texas, <u>does not</u> in any way affect content, instruction or discussion in a course at public colleges and universities in Texas. Expectations and academic freedom for teaching and class discussion have not been altered post-SB 17, and students should not feel the need to censor their speech pertaining to topics including race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

Course Outline / Schedule

Please see D2L for the most up-to-date schedule.