

SCHOOL OF ARTS & SCIENCES PROSPECTUS

Course ID and 6-digit Number: ANTH/AFRC/GSWs 334/634

Course Level: This is an upper-level undergraduate seminar and a graduate course team-taught by Deborah A. Thomas (ANTH) and Grace Sanders-Johnson (AFRC), in collaboration with Krystal Strong (GSE) and community partners.

Course Description:

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the deep inequities of our social systems, and protests against police killings drew broader attention to anti-Black state violence worldwide, yet the gendered dimensions of these problems are not always fully understood. While many in the public have come to recognize the suffering of Black boys and men as acute and eventful, Black girls' suffering has remained largely invisible, a slow confluence of violences that too often go unaddressed. As one way to bring the issues facing Black girls globally to public attention, and to celebrate and support Black girls, this course will provide a background for understanding the challenges faced by Black girls in Philadelphia, Jamaica, and South Africa. We will frame these challenges historically and geopolitically, drawing attention to the issues that contribute to the invisibility of the ordinary Black girl in diverse sites, as well as the resources that will begin to address them. This course also aims to equip students to understand the relationships between research and creative work, and to see artistic production as a catalyst for community-building and critical thinking and action. Toward this end, we will work with a number of partners in Philadelphia, including the Colored Girls Museum and Black Lives Matter-Philly. A similar course will be offered simultaneously at the University of Johannesburg under the auspices of the Center for the Study of Race, Class, and Gender, and taught by Victoria Collis-Buthelezi and documentary filmmaker Zethu Matebeni. We plan for the two groups of students to meet together (via zoom), when possible. The course is supported by the Paideia Program, and by a Making a Difference in Global Communities Grant.

As this is a weekly three-hour seminar, students will be expected to participate robustly in class discussions, and in all "field" visits. Students will also create multi-modal projects for their final assignments. **Because the course involves a variety of forms of community engagement and summer travel, all interested students should fill out the questionnaire below, and send responses to deborah.thomas@sas.upenn.edu.**

The class is part of a broader multi-year project that is designed to address the gendered dimensions of broader social inequalities. Students from the seminar will accompany faculty and community partners to Jamaica (summer 2022) and South Africa (summer 2023) to develop relationships with artists who will be involved in a portraiture project in both locations. Students will also engage with community partners who have been involved in civil society and legal organizing related to girls, women, and community development. Through these engagements, they will also learn about both the continuities and specificities of issues facing black girls in different diasporic locations. For more information about the class, and about the project as a whole, listen to this podcast, recorded by the Paideia Program:

<https://snfpaideia.upenn.edu/political-empathy-place-space-and-positionality/>

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE COURSE?

- 1) Students will come to better understand the foundations of the gendered and racialized hierarchies that structure contemporary experiences of inequality.
- 2) Students will come to understand contemporary inequalities transnationally; that is, they will take a global and diasporic perspective on the issues facing black girls across a variety of locations.
- 3) Students will develop productive ways to integrate artistic interventions, community-based engagement, and scholarship.
- 4) Students will interrogate their own position vis-à-vis the issues the course addresses, and will learn how to incorporate their own subjectivity within ethnographic engagements.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name
2. Year and Program of study or Major
3. Why are you interested in this course?
4. Do you have any personal or community experience working with black girls?
5. Are you working on research, dissertation, thesis, installation, or performance regarding black girls?
6. Do you have any training, skills, or co-collaboration experience that you believe will uniquely contribute to the goals of the course? If so, explain.
7. Are you able or willing to travel internationally for the course beyond the Spring 2022 semester? (Jamaica, July 2022, 2 weeks)
8. Have you travelled internationally or worked outside of the United States? If so, where, for how long, and with what organization(s)?
9. Can you identify moments (big or small) in which you have been complicit (directly or indirectly) in causing physical or emotional harm to a black girl?