This upper level seminar explores the intersections between race and sexuality at different periods in American history. Students in History 331 will develop a broad theoretical understanding of how race and sexuality operate as systems of power and how they shape and construct one another. While grounded in historical methods, this class explicitly studies intersectionality (the ways in which race, sexuality, gender, class, and other identities intersect, construct one another, construct social hierarchies, and affect individual lives). We will draw on other disciplines—from art history to literary analysis—in order to explore the ways in which race and sexuality have operated to create social hierarchies, construct normative categories, maintain relations of power, and shape individual identities at different historical moments. As a research seminar, History 331 also considers the challenges of doing research on topics related to race and sexuality. We will focus particular attention on how to read primary sources related to this topic, ranging from legal documents to letters to visual representations, as well as how to address the silences that available sources do not address.

This course is designed to challenge advanced students in History, American Studies, African-American Studies, and Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies. The class will help students hone their critical thinking skills, read difficult texts closely and carefully, express arguments in a spirited intellectual exchange, and pursue independent original research.

Course Readings:


Janell Hobson, *Venus in the Dark: Blackness and Beauty in Popular Culture* (Routledge, 2005)

Melton McLaurin, *Celia, A Slave* (Harper Perennial, 1993)


All books are available at the bookstore and are on reserve at Mudd. Items marked with a * on the syllabus are posted on the Course Readings Section of the blackboard site.
Course Requirements:

**Participation and Attendance (25% of final grade):**

*Race and Sexuality* is a discussion-based seminar. Student participation is vital to the success of the class. Students are expected to arrive at class each week prepared to talk about the readings, and to engage thoughtfully and respectfully in a discussion with classmates. I consider the ability to express oneself in discussion as important as written expression. If for any reason you are uncomfortable speaking in class, please come to see me at the beginning of the semester to discuss strategies for becoming an active participant in class.

In addition, each student will sign up to help introduce and lead off discussion once during the semester. During the week that you are starting off discussion, your reading paper (see below) should be used to frame a few questions for class discussion. Discussion leaders are required to post their reading papers on blackboard by 10:00 p.m. on Sunday night, and all students will be expected to read the paper/s before coming to class on Monday. In class, the student leading off discussion should spend about 5 to 10 minutes framing the week’s topic for the class and raising questions for the class to address.

Because History 331 only meets once a week, each student is expected to attend every class during the semester. If you miss one meeting of the seminar, you can make this up by writing a five-page response paper on the readings for the class that you missed and turning the paper in before the next class meeting. Any additional unexcused absences will lead to a 1/6th reduction in the final grade for the course.

**Response Papers (25% of final grade):**

In order to facilitate engaged discussion of the readings, students are expected to write a 2-page response paper about the readings for nine of the eleven weeks with scheduled readings (you may choose which two weeks to skip). Response papers should not summarize the readings. Instead, they should recognize common themes among the readings, explore differences, and raise questions for further discussion. These papers should be thoughtful, carefully written pieces of work in which you critically engage with the various readings for the class. In your paper you might choose to focus on an aspect of the week’s themes or readings that interests you. You might draw connections between the readings for one week and those done in a previous week, or you might consider an author’s methodology or assess an author’s use of sources. Reading papers should be no more than 500-words. They must be typed and double-spaced, and they must include a word count. Reading papers must be posted to blackboard by 9:00 a.m. on Monday mornings. Late papers will not be accepted. Readings papers will be graded on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = poor; 3 = adequate; 5 = exceptional).

**Research Paper (Paper, 45% of final grade; Oral presentation, 5% of final grade):**

The major assignment for History 331 is to write a 15 to 20-page final research paper on a topic related to the history of race and sexuality in the United States. Papers can address any topic within the broad field of race and sexuality, with my approval. Papers must be based on original research. They should also draw on relevant secondary sources and course materials to locate and contextualize your topic. We will discuss the process of defining good research topics in class. The following deadlines are associated with the research paper:

**Monday, March 1:** A formal proposal for your research paper is due in class. These proposals should explain your proposed topic, the methodology you plan to use to conduct your research, and should include a preliminary bibliography of potential primary sources. Proposals should be 1-2 pages long.

**Monday, April 5:** An update on the status of your research, as well as an expanded primary and secondary source bibliography are due in class.
Monday, May 10: First drafts of research papers due in class.

Thursday, May 14: Each student will sign up for an individual meeting with me to discuss the draft of the research paper.

Saturday, May 22: Revised versions of the research paper are due by noon at my office, Rice 306. (Papers may, of course, be submitted earlier). Late papers will not accepted under any circumstances. Students who cannot turn in the paper on May 22nd because of a medical or family emergency will have to take an incomplete in the course.

During our last class on Monday, May 10th, each student will give a formal oral presentation of his or her. Presentations should last no more than 10 minutes. These presentations should not be “off-the-cuff” remarks, but should offer a polished presentation of the research you have undertaken in your paper. Presentation guidelines will be handed out in advance.

Course Policies:
Plagiarism and the Honor Code: All work for this course must be done in compliance with the Oberlin Honor Code. Any cases of plagiarism will be dealt with immediately according to the letter of college policy. Plagiarism is passing the work of others off as your own work. You must acknowledge when you use the ideas of other people (whether that be other students or published materials from websites, to books, to the media). If you have questions about how to footnote, just ask!

Students with Disabilities: Appropriate accommodations will be granted to students with documented disabilities. Please see me at the beginning of the semester to discuss the accommodations you need.

General Courtesy: Please come to class on time, and once you’re here, plan on staying for the full class session. If you must arrive late or leave early, please let me know ahead of time. Be sure to TURN OFF your cell phone before class starts.
Course Schedule

February 8: Introduction

February 15: Theorizing and Researching Race and Sexuality


Part I: From Settlement to the Civil War

February 22: Conquest and Cultural Conflict

Joanne Nagel, “Sex and Conquest” in *Race, Ethnicity, and Sexuality*, 63-90


Rebecca Faery, “Close Encounters of the First Kind,” in *Cartographies of Desire: Captivity, Race & Sex in the Shaping of an American Nation* (Norman: University of OK Press, 1999), 87-141

March 1: Constructing the Racial/Sexual Order in the Colonial Period

Kirsten Fischer, *Suspect Relations*

Topic prospectus and preliminary primary source bibliography due in class.

March 3, 4:30 p.m: Recommended Lecture—Lisa Nakamura, “Race and Virtual Worlds”
March 8: The Sexual Systems of Slavery

Melton McLaurin, Celia, A Slave


Dorothy Roberts, Killing the Black Body, Chapter 1, pp. 22-55


Part II: From the Civil War through the Second World War

March 15: Sexual Violence and the post-Civil War Social Order

Martha Hodes, “The Sexualization of Reconstruction Politics: White Women and Black Men in the South after the Civil War” in John Fout and Maura Shaw Tantillo, ed., American Sexual Politics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 59-74*

Hannah Rosen, “Not that Sort of Women;: Race, Gender, and Sexual Violence during the Memphis Riot of 1866” in Hodes, ed., Sex, Love, Race, 267-293*

Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Southern Black Women: Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance” in Southern Women: Histories and Identities, edited by Virginia Bernhard, Betty Brandon, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Theda Perdue (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 177-189*

Robyn Wiegman, “Anatomy of Lynching” in American Sexual Politics, 59-74*

James Baldwin, “Going to Meet the Man” in Going to Meet the Man (New York Dial Press, 1965), 229-249 *

Film: Birth of a Nation

A scene from D.W. Griffith's 1915 film, “Birth of a Nation”
March 22: Sex and Race in the Urban North and West

Chad Heap, *Slumming*


April 5: Sex, Race, and American Empire

Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire*

Research update and expanded bibliography due

April 6, 4:30 p.m.: Recommended Lecture—Peter Boag, “Cross-Dressing in the West”

April 12: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race

Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*

*Part III: Modern America*

April 19: Challenging the Legacies of Sexual Racism

Danielle McGuire, “‘It was Like All of Us Had Been Raped’: Sexual Violence, Community Mobilization, and the African American Freedom Movement,” *Journal of American History* 91:3 (December 2004): 906-931

Janell Hobson, *Venus in the Dark*


*Optional: A French print (c. 1814) depicting the Saartjie Baartman, a Khoisan woman put on display in Europe as “The Hottentot Venus”*
April 26: Race and Reproduction in Modern America

Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body*, Intro and Chapters 2-7, pp. 3-21, 56-312


May 3: Race and Queer Identities in the Contemporary U.S.


*Film: Tongues Untied (Viewing Time and Place, TBA)*

May 10: Final Presentations—Class will be today extended until 5:00 p.m.

Drafts of research papers due in class. These drafts should be complete pieces of work, fully written with proper citations and a bibliography.

May 14: Individual meetings about drafts—to be scheduled

May 22: Final Versions of Research Papers due by noon at Rice 306.