

**EN201.01 “Versions in Black”: Black Women’s Writing**  
Fall 2002

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Alexander, Elizabeth	“The Venus Hottentot” (handout)
Butler, Octavia	<i>Wild Seed</i>
Jones, Gayl	<i>Corregidora</i>
Kennedy, Adrienne	<i>Adrienne Kennedy in One Act</i> <i>The People Who Led to My Plays</i>
BarbaraNeely	<i>Blanche on the Lam</i>
Woodson, Jacqueline	<i>Autobiography of a Family Photo</i>

**Supplemental Readings:**

Alexander, Elizabeth	“Can you be BLACK and look at this?: Reading the Rodney King Video(s)”
Boyce Davies, Carole	“Hearing Black Women’s Voices: Transgressing Imposed Boundaries”
Carby, Hazel	“Slave and Mistress: Ideologies of Womanhood Under Slavery”
Griffin, Farah	“Textual Healing: Claiming Black Women’s Bodies, the Erotic, and Resistance in Contemporary Novels of Slavery”
hooks, bell	“Writing Autobiography” “Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination”
Lorde, Audre	“The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action” “The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism” “Uses of the Erotic/Erotic as Power” “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House”
Piper, Adrian	“Passing for White, Passing for Black”
Spillers, Hortense	“Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book”
Staples, Brent	“The Shifting Meanings of ‘Black’ and ‘White’”

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The phrase “Black Women’s Writing” implies that such writing is a fixed, if not homogeneous, “thing” that can be neatly defined *and* represented. Our course constitutes itself *against* this idea. In other words, rather than experiencing writing by black North American women as an easily definable body of work, we seek to represent “Black Women’s Writing” as diverse, complicated, and sometimes contradictory. By so reading, discussing, and writing about these works we will be encouraged to reexamine notions of race, gender, sexuality, community, and history. Additionally, we will examine the varied genres black women writers use to articulate their imaginings. Required readings come from the fields of science fiction/fantasy (Octavia Butler), detective (BarbaraNeeley) and prose/experimental novels (Gayl Jones; Jacqueline Woodson), drama (Adrienne Kennedy), poetry (Elizabeth Alexander), and autobiography/memoir (Adrienne Kennedy). This diversity will allow us to explore the ways that form informs meaning and content.