

AFA 3930, WST 3930, AMH 3931, Section Varies—Slavery & Black Girlhood
Meeting Time: MWF 11:45 AM-12:35 PM **Fall 2025** **Location:** Anderson 0032

Dr. Courtney Moore Taylor-Lecturer

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Mondays & Wednesdays: 10:30 am-11:30 am or by appointment

Course Description:

North American slavery continues to captivate the American public. While scholars have greater insight into enslaved peoples' lives, attention is just beginning to focus on the girls and teenagers who populated Southern plantations and farms.

This course examines those enslaved youth by using theoretical frameworks of Black Girlhood to examine how age altered the enslaved female experience. Slave narratives, Works Progress Administration interviews and scholarly research will be examined to explore the concept of girlhood, how it was impacted by race and class, girlhood in relation to slavery historiography, and the day-to-day experiences of Black girls and teens as they moved toward adulthood. The course concludes by examining the historical facts we have engaged to make connections with modern day Black girls and the creation of an experiential learning experience designed for public school children in grades (K-12).

Students will analyze these concepts and historic accounts through lectures, class discussions, and an array of data including peer-reviewed journal articles, primary source documents, and audio-visual materials. Moreover, assessments ranging from essays, tests and experiential projects are included to help students reach the ascribed Social Science objective. Subsequently, through the exploration of human behavior linked to black girls, opinions and outcomes, students will gain insight into their own beliefs and that of other people.

Social Science (S)

Social Science courses provide students with an understanding of the basic social and behavioral science concepts and principles used in the analysis of behavior and past and present social, political, and economic issues.

During the course the following Student Learning Outcomes will be engaged:

- Identify the concept of girlhood and relevant theories on this age group by examining it through the lens of race and class.
- Describe the historiography of slavery, paying attention to works that engage Black women and girls.
- Analyze the teenage experiences of Harriet Jacobs, Elizabeth Keckley and other girls via primary and secondary sources and locating specific rites of passage associated with the adolescent enslaved female experience using Works Progress Administration interviews.
- Describe basic concepts common in discourse about the enslaved female experience in the United States.
- Practice critical analysis and research skills through various assignments.
- Rehearse public speaking and presentation skills.

Note: This syllabus is a general outline of the course, but it is subject to change. I will let you know if modifications are made.

Required Texts:

Jacobs, Harriet Ann, 1813-1897. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself*. Ed. Lydia Maria Child. Boston: The Author, 1861.

Keckley, Elizabeth Hobbs, 1818-1907. *Behind the Scenes, Or, Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House*. New York: G. W. Carleton, 1868.

White, Deborah Gray. *Ar'n't I a Woman? : Female Slaves in the Plantation South*. Rev. ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999.

Required Articles and Book Chapter Excerpts (most are accessed in the Course reserves):

Alexander, Hadden (2017) "From Silent Object to Vocal Subject: An Analysis of the Historiography of American Slavery," *Armstrong Undergraduate Journal of History*: Vol. 7: Iss. 2, Article 4. (access using the following link: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1024&context=aujh>)

Bailey, David Thomas. "A Divided Prism: Two Sources of Black Testimony on Slavery." *The Journal of southern history* 46, no. 3 (1980): 381–404.

Farmer, Ashley D. "In Search of the Black Women's History Archive." *Modern American history (Cambridge.)* 1, no. 2 (2018): 289–293.

Field, Corinne T., and LaKisha Michelle Simmons. *The Global History of Black Girlhood*. Edited by Corinne T. Field and LaKisha Michelle Simmons. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2022.

Halliday, Aria S. *The Black Girlhood Studies Collection*. Edited by Aria S. Halliday. Toronto: Women's Press, an imprint of CSP Books Inc., 2019. (Chapters by Ashley Smith and Claudine Taafee)

Hine, Darlene Clark. "'Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South': Twenty Years After." *The Journal of African American history* 92, no. 1 (2007): 13–21.

King, Wilma. "'Mad' Enough to Kill: Enslaved Women, Murder, and Southern Courts." *The Journal of African American history* 92, no. 1 (2007): 37–56.

_____. "'Prematurely Knowing of Evil Things': The Sexual Abuse of African American Girls And Young Women In Slavery And Freedom." *The Journal of African American history* 99, no. 3 (2014): 173–196.

Pargas, Damian Alan. "From the Cradle to the Fields: Slave Children and Childhood in the Antebellum South." *Slavery & abolition* 32, no. 4 (2011): 477–493.

Pasierowska, Rachael L. "Up from Childhood: When African-American Enslaved Children Learned of Their Servile Status." *Slavery & abolition* 37, no. 1 (2016): 94–116.

Stevenson, Brenda E. "What's Love Got to Do with It? Concubinage And Enslaved Black Women and Girls in The Antebellum South." *The Journal of African American history*, 98, no. 1 (2013): 99–125.

Taylor, Courtney Moore. "A Badge of Slavery: Clothing and Enslaved Teenage Girls' Identity Formation." *Journal of Southern History* 91, no. 3 (2025): 421-446. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/soh.2025.a966714>.

Webster, Crystal Lynn. "The History of Black Girls and the Field of Black Girlhood Studies: At the Forefront of Academic Scholarship." (access using the following link: <https://www.oah.org/tah/issues/2020/the-history-of-girlhood/the-history-of-black-girls-and-the-field-of-black-girlhood-studies-at-the-forefront-of-academic/>)

White, Deborah Gray. *Ar'n't I a Woman? : Female Slaves in the Plantation South*. Rev. ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999. (Chapters 2-4)

White, Deborah Gray. "'Matter Out of Place': Ar'n't I a Woman? Black Female Scholars and the Academy." *The Journal of African American history* 92, no. 1 (2007): 5–12.

White, Shane and Graham White. "Slave Clothing and African American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries." In *Past and Present*, no. 148, (August,1995): 149-186.

Course Assignments and Assessments:

Student grades are derived from writing assignments, primary research, and exams. The course has firm deadlines for assignments. Most assignments are submitted via Canvas. Below are brief descriptions for each assignment and their percentage in the final overall grade.

Attendance: (5%) Students are expected to **sign-in** at the beginning of ALL class meetings. Attendance factors into your final grade therefore it is vital that students attend class regularly. Perfect attendance means a score of 100 points. Each unexcused absence reduces student grade by 2.9411 points (calculated in Canvas attendance).

What is Black Girlhood? A Reflection Essay: (10%): Each student will compose a 600-900 word reflection on the concept of Black Girlhood. The essay must provide a theoretical definition of girlhood and discuss how race shapes this life cycle. Moreover, students must identify how this concept functions in the United States of America from a historical and contemporary sense. The assignment critically engages notions of positionality requiring students to critically analyze social construction of girlhood, the positives and negatives linked to it and its impact on Black Girls lived experiences. **(Due: September 1st)**

Class Facilitator - 10%: Student will co-facilitate a class session with the instructor. Assignment components include: Scheduling a meeting with the instructor via Zoom or during office hours to discuss the upcoming class session, preparing questions that will guide the conversation, and leading discussion of assigned readings for that week. Students must submit a **minimum of 5** questions to the instructor as part of the facilitation grade. By serving as facilitator students will demonstrate Social Science knowledge of the historical subject they engage; in constructing required questions they will learn to identify, describe and explain social institutions, structures or processes. As well as develop their public speaking and presentation skills. **(Due: Varies by Student; Students will sign up with instructor for due date)**

Works Progress Administration (WPA) Interview Research (20%):
This consists of 2 separate essays valued at 10% each.

To develop your research and critical analysis skills, students will review WPA interviews uncovering examples of the rites of passage Black girls and teens experienced as they transitioned toward womanhood. **900-1200** word assessments will introduce the interviewees, provide an overview of their lives, and engage the specific rite researched. Topics that will be researched include work, dress, sex, and resistance. Interacting with the written interviews of these young women and the historical period, this assignment lends itself to the Social Science objective. Student research and critical thinking skills will also be developed via this assignment.

Assessment 1: Work & Dress

(Due: September 15th)

Assessment 2: Sexual Knowledge & Resistance

(Due: September 22nd)

Eulogy of an Enslaved Girl-(10%) Write a 300-600 word eulogy for one of the enslaved women we've engaged during the first half of the term (i.e Harriet Jacobs or one of the enslaved women used for the WPA Interview research). Eulogies should reflect on their lives as enslaved girls and their specific experiences. Students will share their eulogy in class. Assignment forces students to reexamine their subjects past and situate it within the historical and social landscape of that period. **(Due: October 13th)**

Midterm- (15%) The midterm will test your knowledge of various course readings as we progress through the course. The assessment consists of multiple-choice, true-false and essays. These questions range from basic remembering to application, and evaluation questions **(Due: October 16th)**

Slavery & Black Girls Workshop: (15%)- In the culmination of the information gained this semester students will practically apply their knowledge by constructing a presentation of American Slavery and Black Girlhood that could be engaged with public school children (K-12) in their classrooms. The theories, data, and concepts learned from primary and secondary sources will be compiled to construct a hands-on project for modern youth. Projects will consist of some aspect of enslaved girlhood displayed in a PPT or Canva format as well as an age-appropriate activity for the specified audience. In addition to the presentation, students will write a 1200-1500 word project overview that discusses the topic selected, rationale for the selection of the specific topic and activity and identifies the different resources used to construct your presentation. Projects will be presented to your classmates. **(Due: November 17th)**

Final Exam- (15%) Exam will assess knowledge of the material engaged over the semester. The assessment consists of multiple-choice, true-false and essays. These questions range from basic remembering to application, and evaluation questions. **(Due: December 9th)**

Note: More specific guidelines for writing assignments will be given as their due dates approach.

Make-up exams will be permitted ONLY at the instructor's discretion.

Grading Scale:

94-100=A, 90-93=A-, 87-89=B+, 84-86=B, 80-83=B-, 77-79=C+, 74-76=C, 70-73=C-, 67-69=D+, 64-66=D, 60-63=D-, Below 60 = E.

Non whole numbers that are equal to or greater than .5 will be rounded to the next whole number.

Course Policies

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](#).

Additional policies for review:

Attendance Policy: Students are expected to *be present, punctual, and prepared* and **sign-in** at the beginning of ALL class meetings for the instructor's records. **Attendance counts for 5% of your final grade.** Without question, students who fail to attend class miss vital information which contributes to their lack of success.

Communication: Contact me through Canvas. I do my best to respond to your comments/emails in a timely manner during business hours (evenings are excluded). *Allow 24 hours* during the week for a response to course concerns/emails. *Weekends, I do not check email, so it is imperative that you submit any questions to me before noon on Fridays.*

Written work format and submission:

All assignments should be

- Written in standard English and demonstrate competence of capitalization, grammar, sentence structure, and paragraph structure
- Typed, double-spaced with Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, 1" margins
- Information with your name, date, and course should be in the top corner, single-spaced, on the first page only or on a cover page
- **All work must be properly documented. Students may use APA, MLA, or Turabian.**

I will provide feedback on all written assignments; these comments are intended to strengthen your writing skills. They should be taken as constructive feedback, as I am evaluating clarity, content, structure, and sources.

Policy on late/make-up work: All assignments are known well in advance; therefore, *permission to hand in an assignment late is only granted for exceptional circumstances.*

Classroom Expectations and Etiquette:

Courteous and appropriate classroom behavior is expected. Therefore, please be always mindful of the following during class:

- Students are expected to be **PRESENT, PUNCTUAL, AND PREPARED.**
- Cell phones should be silenced during class. **CALLS AND TEXT MESSAGING DURING CLASS ARE PROHIBITED.**
- Laptops and tablets are allowed in class for note-taking purposes. **HOWEVER – if they interfere with your attention and participation during the class session (i.e. playing on Facebook or checking email), you will be asked to shut down the device.**
- Bringing food to class is a distraction, so it is your responsibility to manage your time appropriately and eat **before class. As such ONLY BEVERAGES, WITH THE APPROPRIATE LIDS, ARE ALLOWED IN CLASS.**
- As we are in a professional learning environment that requires your **ACTIVE** participation, students are asked to **KEEP THEIR HEADS OFF OF THEIR DESKS, ABSTAIN FROM TAKING NAPS, REFRAIN FROM PUTTING THEIR FEET ON THE FURNITURE AND TO TAKE ALL NOTES THAT ARE PROVIDED BY THE INSTRUCTOR.**
- Lastly, we are dealing with material that may be sensitive in terms of race, gender, class, sexuality, violence, and/or political perspective. By remaining enrolled in the course, you are agreeing to complete all assignments and participate during class discussions, regardless of objections you may have on these grounds. **PLEASE KEEP THE DIALOG RESPECTFUL AND RELEVANT.** I encourage students to keep an open mind, and I expect you to **COMMUNICATE YOUR IDEAS WITHOUT HARSHLY OFFENDING YOUR PEERS.**

ALL ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES WILL BE RESPECTED BY THE INSTRUCTOR AND BY ALL CLASS MEMBERS AT ALL TIMES.

Course Outline

Note: Documentaries, and films may accompany a weekly module.
Consult the Canvas Modules for the exact titles.

Week 1

August 22nd

Course Overview/How to be a Successful Student?

WHAT IS BLACK GIRLHOOD?: The Field & Its Concepts

Week 2

August 25th-29th

Facilitator Sign up must be completed by Friday, August 29th

Lecture/Discussion: Define Girlhood. What does it mean to be Black and Girl in America?

Class lectures and discussions on the following reading:

- “Theorizing Black Girlhood by Ashley L. Smith” in *The Black Girlhood Studies Collection* by Aria Halliday
- “The History of Black Girls and the Field of Black Girlhood Studies: At the Forefront of Academic Scholarship” by Crystal Lynn Webster (access via Google Search Engine)
- **Black Girlhood Reflections (Due: August 31st by 11:59 pm)**

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY

Week 3

September 1st-5th (Labor Day Holiday, September 1st, College Closed)

Class lectures and discussions on the following reading:

- “From Silent Object to Vocal Subject: An Analysis of The Historiography of American Slavery” by Hadden Alexander
- “Ar’n’t I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South”: Twenty Years After by Darlene Clark Hine
- “Matter out of place”: Ar’n’t I a Woman? Black Female Scholars and the Academy by Deborah Gray White

FINDING BLACK GIRLS IN THE ARCHIVES

Week 4

September 8th-12th

WPA Interviews (Due: September 14th)

Lecture: Primary Source Overview of Harriet Jacobs, Elizabeth Keckley and WPA Interviews

Class lectures and discussions on the following reading:

- “A Divided Prism: Two Sources of Black Testimony on Slavery.” By David Thomas Bailey. *The Journal of southern history* 46, no. 3 (1980): 381–404.
- “In Search of the Black Women’s History Archive” by Ashley D. Farmer

ENSLAVED GIRLS & THEIR EXPERIENCES

Week 5

September 15th-19th

Lecture: Rites of Passage through Work & Dress

WPA Interviews (Due: September 21st)

Class lectures and discussions on the following reading:

- “Up from Childhood: When African-American Enslaved Children Learned of Their Servile Status.” By Rachael L. Pasierowska. *Slavery & abolition* 37, no. 1 (2016): 94–116.
- From the Cradle to the Fields: Slave Children and Childhood in the Antebellum South by Damian Alan Pargas *Slavery & Abolition* 32, no. 4 (2011): 477–493.
- “Slave Clothing and African American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.” By Shane White, and Graham White. In *Past and Present*, no. 148, (August, 1995): 149-186.
- Taylor, Courtney Moore. "A Badge of Slavery: Clothing and Enslaved Teenage Girls' Identity Formation." *Journal of Southern History* 91, no. 3 (2025): 421-446. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/soh.2025.a966714>.

Week 6

September 22nd-26th

Lecture: Rites of Passage through Sex & Resistance

Class lectures and discussions on the following reading:

- “What’s Love Got to do with it? Concubinage and Enslaved Women and Girls in the Antebellum South by Brenda Stevenson
- “Prematurely Knowing of Evil Things: The Sexual Abuse of African American Girls and Young Women in Slavery and Freedom” by Wilma King
- “Mad” Enough to Kill: Enslaved Women, Murder, and Southern Courts by Wilma King

Week 7

September 29th-October 3rd

Class lectures and discussions on the following reading:

- White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman? : Female Slaves in the Plantation South*. Chapter 2: “The Nature of Female Slavery”
- *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*: Chapters 1-19

Week 8

October 6th-10th

Class lectures and discussions on the following reading:

- *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*: Chapters 20-41
- Eulogy of an Enslaved Girl (Due: October 12th)**

Week 9

October 13th-17th (Homecoming, October 17th, No Classes-University Closed)

Eulogy Presentations and Discussion/ Midterm (Due: October 19th)

Week 10	October 20th-24th Class lectures and discussions on the following reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ White, <i>Ar'n't I a Woman?</i> : <i>Female Slaves in the Plantation South</i>. Chapter 3: "The Life Cycle of the Female Slave" ▪ <i>Behind the Scenes</i>: Chapters 1-5
Week 11	October 27th- 31st Class lectures and discussions on the following reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ White, <i>Ar'n't I a Woman?</i> : <i>Female Slaves in the Plantation South</i>. Chapter 4: "The Female Slave Network" ▪ <i>Behind the Scenes</i>: Chapters 6-10
Week 12	November 3rd-7th Class lectures and discussions on the following reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ White, <i>Ar'n't I a Woman?</i>: <i>Female Slaves in the Plantation South</i>. Chapter 5: "Men, Women, and Families" ▪ <i>Behind the Scenes</i>: Chapters 11-15
Week 13	BLACK GIRLS THEN & NOW November 10th-14th Slavery & Black Girls Workshop: (Due: November 16th by 11:59 pm) Class lectures and discussions on the following reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ White, <i>Ar'n't I a Woman?</i> : <i>Female Slaves in the Plantation South</i>. Chapter 6: "From Slavery to Freedom" ▪ A Meditation on (Re)imagining a world with Black Girls by Claudine "Candy" Taafee in <i>The Black Girlhood Studies Collection</i> by Aria Halliday
Week 14	November 17th-21st Slavery & Black Girls Workshop Presentations
Week 15	November 24th-28th Thanksgiving Break (No Classes-University Closed)
Week 16	December 1st-3rd Presentations & Course Wrap-up

Final Exam:

Due by 11:59 pm on Monday, December 8th

Note: Students will be able to access the exam beginning on December 6th.