COURSE GOAL:
The goal of this course is to critically examine the history, art, psychology, sociology, economics, culture and politics of “Black hair” and the evolving meaning(s) connected to it.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
From ancient times in Africa, during enslavement, throughout the Diaspora, to the present, “Black hair” has had its own meaning(s). Spaces between the knees of a braider, kitchens, beauty/barber shops, and Youtube are creative spaces that have afforded Africans opportunities to teach multiple cultural lessons about hair and life. Black hairstyles have been glorified, imitated and simultaneously scorned in a world where European standards of beauty have been elevated via popular culture as African-like phenotypes (i.e. tightly curled hair, dark skin, thick lips, etc.) and have been devalued. Manifestations of contemporary stereotypes about Black hair are seen when people are labeled/judged based on hair texture, length, color and style. These stereotypes have had real psychological, social, economic, and legal consequences for Africana people.

According to Chris Rock’s popular documentary Good Hair (2009), Black hair care is a $9 billion industry. Still, economics is just one part of the complex saga of Black hair politics, long a source of discourse among scientists, writers, scholars, poets, filmmakers, artists, business owners and lay people. That saga requires an interdisciplinary approach to help reveal the meaning(s) that “Black hair” has in the world.

The “Politics of Black Hair” course provides a comprehensive interdisciplinary examination of issues related to the history, culture, sociology, psychology and economics of “Black hair.” Students will explore contemporary social construction of “Black Hair” and the manner in which hair styles may signify, resist, and conform in society. Students will also explore the invention and modification of creative techniques and products made for grooming and for the artistic, social and political expression of Black hair throughout history. Like specific music, dance, and other forms of Black cultural production, Black hair design and care has an economic component that students will explore. Finally, students will examine the relationship between Black hair, European cultural hegemony and the mass media a key cultural socializing force. Classes will consist of lectures, discussions, film screenings, group presentations, individual research projects, class exercises, a quiz and a final exam.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Students will be able to:

1) Describe the ancient African origins of and practices in Black hair care and some of the individuals and institutions that have influenced Black American hair industry.

2) Demonstrate an understanding of basic concepts and theories (i.e. world view, culture, power, race, gender, stereotype, lookism, cultural hegemony, conflict theory, symbolic interactionism, African-Consciousness, Womanism etc.) and describe their utility in discussing the politics of black hair.
3) Identify and explain some of the theories and works of scientists, scholars, poets, filmmakers and authors who specifically address the politics of “Black Hair” in their work.

4) Name and discuss some Black hairstyles (“naturals,” perméd, braided, dreaded, weaves, extensions, Afros, twists, knots, etc.) and their social and political meaning(s) and challenges.

5) Outline the ever-evolving artistic elements of “Black hair” design/styles and how it has influenced and been influenced by other cultures.

6) Explain the ways that class, gender, religion and other attributes might interface with identity, cultural dependency and self-concept to influence personal hair care regiments and hairstyle choices. In particular, address how individuals consciously and subconsciously symbolize resistance, empowerment, oppression, etc.

7) Describe the basic elements (manufacturing, distribution, licensing, trade shows) of the Black Hair care industry.

8) Identify some of the controversies that accompany certain hairstyle choices (natural, straightened, locks, etc.) and sociological and socio-political effects (employment, relationships, law).

9) Draw a connection between physical and mental health and some black hairstyling practices.

10) Sharpen critical thinking skills and articulate a personal account of their own experience(s) (evolution, challenges, joys) and understandings with hair.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:
Attendance is based on you being on time, signing the roll sheet, being prepared and staying for the entire class. It is assumed that enrollment in the class means that there are no conflicts with other obligations (work, weddings, medical appointments, travel, meetings, hair appointments, etc.) during class time. Poor attendance and tardiness will affect your final grade. If you are over 10 minutes late for two classes, you will earn one full absence. No further admonishments will be made.

In the case of an official university excuse or a documented medical emergency provide me with a written letter and/or medical excuse on a physician’s official letterhead or official university letterhead that includes the time and date of your care or other business upon your return to class. Simply telling me that you’ll be absent or that you were sick does not automatically become an “excused absence.”

MAKE UP POLICY: All assignments are known in advance; therefore, permission to hand in an assignment late or to make up and exam is only granted for exceptional circumstances.

Quiz/Test/Exam: Students with documented official university or medical excuses may take a make up test. The professor must be notified before or immediately after the absence and the test must be scheduled on the first day that the student returns to campus. Students who do not provide documentation and reschedule the test within two days of missing it, will not be given a make up.

Assignments: Students with valid official university or documented medical excuses be allowed to turn in assignments within one day of her/his return to campus without penalty. The assignment will be considered late and reduced one letter grade for each day the assignment is not turned in beginning with the due date if the proper documentation is not provided.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:
In compliance with the University of Florida’s policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations. The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. More information may be found here: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/.
STATEMENT REGARDING HARRASMENT:
UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. To learn more about this policy, visit: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/scrc/sexual/

UNIVERSITY CODE OF HONOR:
Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University of Florida’s Student Honor Code and Code of Conduct. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. Students suspected of academic dishonesty or of violating the Honor Code will be reported to the Dean of Students Office. To learn more about the UF policy regarding Academic Honesty, please visit: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.php

COUNSELING ASSISTANCE: Students who may experience stress related personal issues are encouraged to visit the University of Florida Counseling and Wellness Center at 3190 Radio Rd. www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/ 392-1575.

REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION:

1. **CLASS ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION** (10%):
   (See the Attendance Policy on Page 2) Participation means that you have completed your readings and/or assignments on time and are able to contribute to the class discussions. Any information and/or changes that are announced in class are YOUR responsibility, whether you attended class or not. Unexcused absences and tardiness will decrease your grade for participation. If you must miss class, for any reason, on a day that you are due to present or turn in an assignment, you must turn in your work ahead of time. **Notebook:** You should purchase a dedicated spiral notebook for this class. You should make a habit of taking lecture notes, reading notes and media notes. Note the names of article authors, film titles, etc.

   If you’re absent, do not ask me if you missed anything important. I will do my best to make all classes relevant and interesting. Get to know your classmates so that you may ask them what you missed. If you have any questions about lectures, readings or anything else, please do not hesitate to visit or e-mail me at hilliardnunn@ufl.edu.

2. **HAIR BLOG/VLOG COMMENTARY** 20%:
Select one (1) of the thousands of BLACK HAIR blogs or vlogs or websites on the internet. Read or view a video story on a topic that interests you and write a review of the article and the comment section. Be sure to select a site that has AT LEAST 15 responses/comments. Write a five (5) page analysis of the comments. What themes do you find? What issues are raised and how is Black Hair addressed? What do you think about the comments? What, if anything, do the comments say about our society? What, one paragraph, comment would you add to the blog? Include the complete citation for the source that you choose. Include references. (Due: 9/16)

3. **QUIZ** (10%):
Based on class readings, discussions, presentations, lectures and media shared in class. The quiz will consist of short (essay) items. You may use your dedicated class spiral notebook ONLY. No articles, loose note pages or books, pasted in paper, etc. may be used. (Due: Oct 7)

4. **PERSONAL “HAIRSTORY” ESSAY & PRESENTATION** (20%):
Write a 5 page essay about your personal relationship with hair (grooming, preferred styles, forced styles, desired styles, exploration, judgments from other people, etc.). Incorporate a discussion about
your early lessons about the “meaning” of hair and “rules” for hair care and styling as they relate to gender, race, age, class, faith, etc. Address what role others may or may not have played in your experience with hair. Address the role that mass media socialization may have played in your experience and the shaping of your hair identity. Your paper must incorporate a research based position on issues and theories addressed in class. Use at least six (6) references, not including the course readings. (All papers are Due: 10/28)

“HAIRSTORY” PRESENTATION: Share your story with the class. This should be done using a power point OR by making a brochure that includes images that depict your “hairstory.” You will have 10 minutes maximum to share. (DUE: dates will vary)

6. GROUP RESEARCH & PRESENTATION ON BLACK HAIR and CULTURE (20%): Students will sign up to work with one group. Each group member must contribute in a meaningful way to researching, organizing and preparing a solid presentation that illuminates critical issues related to the topic. The group has the flexibility to focus on an area of the pre-assigned topic that they wish. Groups will turn in a written component and give a class presentation. The group presentation will last no less than 30 minutes and include a presentation of research that addresses individuals, issues and theories, that are relevant to the topic. Presentations must include a Power Point, or DVD, or a skit, or an audio production or a combination of these elements. Pay attention to form, creativity and substance are very important. I must approve the outline of your presentation no later than two weeks before you present. E-mail your full group report by 3:00PM the day before your presentation. (See the Handout for more information) (Due: Varies)

5. TEST BRING A BLUE BOOK (20%): Based on class readings, discussions, presentations, lectures and media shared in class. The test will consist of short (essay) items. You may use your dedicated class spiral notebook ONLY - No articles, loose note pages or books may be used on the test. The test will not be given early. (Due: Dec 11)

REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATION AT A GLANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%: WRITE YOUR GRADE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Attendance &amp; Participation &amp; Notebook</td>
<td>10% _______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Quiz</td>
<td>10% _______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Blog/Vlog Report</td>
<td>20% _______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Personal Hairstory Essay &amp; Presentation</td>
<td>20% _______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Group Presentation – Article</td>
<td>20% _______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Test</td>
<td>20% _______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100% _______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


PRESENTATION OF WORK:
All assignments must be typed, double-spaced using Times New Roman 12 point font in MS Word. Use a standard one-inch margin - no bold-faced fonts. Use the style APA, MLA or Chicago that is used in your academic discipline. All pages should be numbered and stapled. Include two lines of identifying information in the upper right hand corner, single-spaced. Quotations should be kept to a minimum and should only be used if they help to move your thesis forward. Be sure to incorporate the terms, concepts
and theories discussed in class. Work will be considered late and graded down one letter grade after the beginning of class on the due date. Work will continue to be reduced a letter grade for each additional day it is late. **Finally, DO NOT e-mail or fax papers unless I ask you to.**

*UF has an online writing assistance site at [http://web.cwoc.ufl.edu/owl](http://web.cwoc.ufl.edu/owl)*

**EVALUATION OF ALL CLASS ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS IS BASED ON:**
The instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on all written assignments. Your work will be evaluated with respect to 1) Quality, scope and organization of documentation; 2) Clarity and coherence of expression; 3) Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation; 4) Quality of critical analysis; 5) Demonstration of an understanding of information and concepts addressed in the readings and/or discussed in class; 6) Following directions and completing assignments on time. Students are also expected to meet the minimum word count and deadlines as outlined in the syllabus.

**NOTE:** **No eating or drinking in class. Eat BEFORE class. No cell phones, pagers, laptops or other electronic devices may be used in class.**

**REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS:**

**REQUIRED ARTICLES:** Readings are DUE on the day that they appear on the Course Outline.


# Black Hair Politics - Course Outline / Due Dates

*This syllabus is a guide. Please read it carefully.*

*Should any changes be made you will be notified ahead of time.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>READINGS / WORK DUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tues-8/26 WELCOME/OVERVIEW</td>
<td>SYLLABUS - INTRODUCTIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs-8/28 SANKOFA - HISTORY</td>
<td>READING: Byrd &amp; Tharps Chapter 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tues-9/2 AFRICAN HAIR &amp; MEANING(S)</td>
<td>READING: Walker, Alice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs-9/4 SOCIALIZATION</td>
<td>READING: Byrd &amp; Tharps Chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IN CLASS: <em>Hairpiece: A Film for Nappy Headed People</em> by Ayoka Chenzira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tues-9/9 SOCIALIZATION</td>
<td>READING: Tate, S.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|      | Thurs-9/11 CULTURAL HEGEMONY | "I Love My Hair" Sesame Street VIDEO
A Girl Like Me by Keri Davis VIDEO |
| WEEK 4 | Tues-9/16 COLORISM / “HAIRISM” | DUE: Blog/Vlog Analysis |
|       |                                       | READING: Dumas, T. L. Rosette, A. S. |
|       |                                       | Whip My Hair by Willow Smith VIDEO |
| WEEK 5 | Tues-9/23 POLITICS OF BLACK HAIR | READING: Mercer, Kobena |
|       | Thurs-9/25 NATURAL HAIR | READING: Byrd & Tharps Chapter 3 
and Saka, Honorable |
| WEEK 6 | Tues-9/30 ECONOMICS | READING: Byrd & Tharps Chapter 4 
and Greene, Fields |
<p>|       | Thurs-10/2 GOOD HAIR FILM DISCUSSION | READING: Byrd &amp; Tharps Chapter 6 |
|       |                                       | IN CLASS: <em>Black Hair, An Incendiary Expose</em> by Aron Ranen |
|       |                                       | VIEW IN LIBRARY: <em>Good Hair</em> by Chris Rock |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK 7</th>
<th>Tues-10/7</th>
<th>QUIZ</th>
<th>OPEN NOTE ONLY – You may bring your dedicated course notebook No books or articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs-10/9</td>
<td>LOOKISM</td>
<td>READING: Byrd &amp; Tharps  Chapter 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEEK 8</td>
<td>Tues-10/14</td>
<td>ART, ARTIFICE, DESIGN &amp; STYLE / PERFORMANCE</td>
<td>The Power of Black Hair Video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs-10/16</td>
<td>HAIR WEAVING</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IN CLASS: Hair India  (2011) by Raffaele Brunetti  VIDEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEEK 9</td>
<td>Thurs-10/21</td>
<td>GENDER AND MEANINGS</td>
<td>READING: TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs-10/23</td>
<td>EMPLOYMENT RESISTENCE &amp; ACCOMMODATION</td>
<td>READING: McAlexander, and Schouten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>READING: Weitz, Rose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEEK 10</td>
<td>Thurs-10/28</td>
<td>HAIR STORIES 1</td>
<td>DUE: ALL Hairstory Essays Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs-10/30</td>
<td>HAIR STORIES 2</td>
<td>10 minutes each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEEK 11</td>
<td>Thurs-11/4</td>
<td>HAIR STORIES 3</td>
<td>10 minutes each.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs-11/6</td>
<td>HAIR STORIES 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEEK 12</td>
<td>Tues-11/11</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs-11/13</td>
<td>BLACK HAIR &amp; LITERATURE</td>
<td>BRING: Hair related Poem(s) to share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEEK 13</td>
<td>Tues-11/18</td>
<td>“AESTHETIC RESISTANCE”</td>
<td>READING: Sekayi, Dia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs-11/20</td>
<td>TRANSFORMATION GROUP PRESENTATION #1 Self Acceptance: Black Hair and Identity</td>
<td>READING: Byrd &amp; Tharps  Chapter 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEEK 14</td>
<td>Tues-11/25</td>
<td>GROUP PRESENTATION #2 Natural Hair: Language, Rules &amp; Realities</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs-11/27</td>
<td>NO CLASS THANKSGIVING</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| WEEK 15 | Tues – 12/2 | GROUP PRESENTATION #3  
|Black American Hair Art and Design |
| | Thurs-12/4 | GROUP PRESENTATION #4  
|Black Men & Hair |
| | | GROUP PRESENTATION #5  
|Black Hair in Film & TV Culture |
| WEEK 16 | Tues – 12/9 | REFLECTIONS  
|TEST DISCUSSION |
| | Thurs-12/11 | TEST |

**RECOMMENDED WEBSITES and READINGS:** There are numerous websites, magazines, books and other texts which address the care, politics, and other issues related to Black hair.

http://www.blackhairmedia.com/
http://nappturality.com/
http://www.blackhairinformation.com/
http://www.blackhairplanet.com/
http://www.africanwonders.com/
http://www.caroldsdaughter.com/
http://karenhalliburton.com/
http://thecoilreview.com/
http://www.nappynaturally.com
http://www.endarkenment.com


