FALL COURSE OFFERING

BLACK WOMEN, POPULAR CULTURE, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

ANTH 4020/5020 Explorations in Anthropology

Fall 2017: MW 4:00-5:15 PM

Prof. Bianca Williams

This course takes an in-depth look at how race and gender influence the pursuit of happiness in the United States, particularly for Black women. By putting theorizations and representations of Blackness, womanhood, and happiness into conversation with one another, students will be able to investigate whether, and to what extent, historical processes of racism and sexism continue to leave their imprints on an individual’s ability to attain happiness. Throughout the course, we will examine representations of race, gender, and happiness present in self-help books, music, films, magazines, blogs, and other forms of media. Using analytic lenses from Africana Studies, Anthropology, Psychology, Cultural Studies, and Women and Gender Studies, this course provides students with an intense interrogation of Black feminist thought, race theories, and gender studies. Therefore, the following questions are of interest for this course:

(1) How do race and gender affect an individual’s ability to pursue happiness?

(2) What are the emotional and economic “costs” of happiness? In other words, how do Black women negotiate work/life balance, including professional success, educational pursuits, family development, intimate relationships, friendships, and health and wellness while pursuing happiness?

(3) What do Black women’s experiences of pursuing happiness in the U.S. tell us about the broader American concept of “the pursuit of happiness?”