

# HON 440 – The Women of Hip Hop

*Course meets Monday-Friday from 1:00-2:30 via Zoom*

**Instructor:**

**Office:** RLL 150

**Office Hours:** Summer hours by appointment only (after class typically works best)

**Email:**

“The chief reason why so many give such a little attention to the background of the Negro is the belief that this study is unimportant. . . . The oppressor has always indoctrinated the weak with this interpretation of the crimes of the strong.”

— Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1933)

“We need a feminism that possesses the same fundamental understanding held by any true student of hip-hop. Truth can’t be found in the voice of any one rapper but in the juxtaposition of many.”

— Joan Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost* (1999)

## Course Description

Women have routinely shaped hip hop culture from its very beginning. This seminar explores the complexity, contradictions, and contributions of female rappers through assigned readings and music playlists. Moreover, since the work of female rappers is often overlooked and undocumented, students will work to revive their legacies through response papers, presentations, and transcribing missing lyrics on Genius.com. The central tenet of this class is that we have been mis-educated about the history of these prolific artists.

### Course Goals

By the end of this semester, students should have the skills and knowledge necessary to

1. Explain the historical origins of rap and hip-hop culture.
2. Detect and correct the erasure of contributions made by women to rap.
3. Explain various ways female rappers negotiate the public sphere.
4. Explain the ideological underpinnings of rap along the vectors of race, gender, and class.
5. Evaluate, analyze, and describe rap music as a rhetorical practice.

### Required Text

Iandoli, Kathy. *God Save the Queens: The Essential History of Women in Hip-Hop*. New York: Dey St, 2019.

All other readings will be available on WebCampus.

I will also provide students with Spotify playlists curated for each class. If you do not already have a Spotify account, you will need to create one. To access my playlists, add my username **bblankfield**

Occasionally, I will have music videos on YouTube for you to watch in addition to the reading.

## Seminar Assignments

### Response Papers/Transcriptions

Each week this semester you will need to submit either a transcription or a response paper on Friday. Whichever type of assignment you would like to complete is fine by me, but you must complete at least one of each by the end of the semester. Thus, this semester you could complete 1 transcription and 3 response papers, or 3 transcriptions and 1 response paper, or 2 transcriptions and 2 response papers (in whatever order).

For the transcription, you will transcribe a song by a female rapper that has not yet been transcribed on genius.com. The song cannot be primarily a skit or instrumental track. Moreover, it needs to be over 90 seconds long. You can, however, count two/three smaller songs as one song if they are at least three minutes combined. Along with the transcription, I would like approximately one page in which you reflect on the song itself. For instance, what is the song about? To what extent does it serve as commentary on race, gender, or class? Does it exemplify any course content that we have discussed? This page of commentary should be grammatically correct. You will not need to create a genius account; I can upload this for you. If you would like to submit it to genius.com yourself, you need to do so after I return your graded transcription.

For the response paper, you will analyze a rap song in light of an article we have read that week. You are welcome to choose any rap song by a female rapper, especially any of the ones I have provided in the daily playlist. The best response papers will contain a thesis, illustrate a clear understanding of key ideas, cite relevant passages (no works cited necessary), and incorporate your own insights that go beyond a rehash of our own class discussions. These response papers must be three pages long (no less than 2.5 and no more than 3.5) and grammatically correct. You can craft an essay response to everyone **except** Iandoli, Wallace, Pareles, or Mills.

### Participation

Students are expected to engage the material in class and contribute to class discussion. In my senior level seminars, I generally call on students only when they raise their hands as I believe they need to be taking initiative at this point in their undergraduate career. Although I will write notes on the board during each class, I recommend that make your own brief notes after completing a reading. These notes should summarize the argument, key terms, and any interconnections you may have made with previous readings, class discussions, or your own knowledge. You should also formulate a few questions or comments to make during class. Doing so will ensure a better participation grade, but also a more vibrant class discussion.

*COVID-19 Addendum:* I will always have my video camera on during class. I ask the same of you. By turning off your webcam, everyone feels far more distant from each other and that makes the classroom experience far less enjoyable. If you have technical difficulties or shoddy internet connection, I understand, but if you are able, I strongly encourage you to keep your webcam running.

### Rap Album Presentation

During the last week of class, each student will give an 8-10 minute informative speech about a rap album by a female artist of their choice. In this presentation, students will inform us about the artist, genre of hip hop, and explain at least two key tracks. Please don't explain tracks we have already covered in class. Students will be graded upon their ability to speak extemporaneously and explain

the album in light of our course readings. Visual aids and sound clips are required. Students will need to confirm their album selection with me by no later than Friday, June 19.

## Course Policies

### Assignments

I will be collecting all your homework online via Canvas. Please submit your homework as a Word .doc or PDF. If I need to ask you to resubmit it because the file is wrong or corrupt, I consider it late. All late assignments will receive a 10% deduction. Assignments turned in after the due date will receive a 20% deduction for every DAY (not every class day) they are late.

### Attendance

Students are expected to attend each class. That said, I recognize that emergencies and appointments sometimes conflict with our schedules. Thus, students are allowed to miss one class without any grade deductions. Each absence after the one permitted, however, will result in a 3% grade deduction. At four absences (including the one permitted), your final grade will be a D. If you are absent six times (including the one permitted), you will fail the course.

Please note that students who are consistently late to class will also receive a grade deduction—I will consider three “lates” to qualify as an absence. You are considered late if you are not present when I begin taking attendance or the official start time of class, whichever occurs last. If you miss more than half of the class without advance notice and permission, I will consider you absent for the day.

Students must have their webcams on to be considered present. If situations in your home make this untenable, you must speak with me before the start of the third class to let me know why. While I can be accommodating in instances of genuine need, I reserve the right to note which excuses are not appropriate.

### Office Hours

If you need assistance, have questions, or need clarification on an assignment, please feel free to send me an email or catch me after class. I check my email during work hours, which runs from 9-5 on Mondays through Fridays. Anticipate that a response may take 24 hours. Please do not expect an email sent the morning before class to have been read prior to class. **I do not have my phone synced with my school email account.**

### Course Evaluation

- Transcriptions/Response papers      60% [15% apiece]
- Class participation                      20%
- Final Presentation                        20%

Grades will be determined on the following scale

|             |             |             |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 93-100% = A | 80-82% = B- | 67-69% = D+ |
| 90-92% = A- | 77-79% = C+ | 63-66% = D  |
| 87-89% = B+ | 73-76% = C  | 60-62% = D- |
| 83-86% = B  | 70-72% = C- | 0-59% = F   |

## UNLV Policies

### **Public Health Directives**

Face coverings are mandatory for all faculty and students in the classroom. Students must follow all active UNLV public health directives while enrolled in this class. [UNLV public health directives](#) are found at . Students who do not comply with these directives may be asked to leave the classroom. Refusal to follow the guidelines may result in further disciplinary action according to the [UNLV Code of Student Conduct](#), including being administratively withdrawn from the course.

### **Academic Misconduct**

Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the University community. We all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility, and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy, and are encouraged to always take the ethical path whenever faced with choices. Students enrolling at UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's educational mission. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another person, from the Internet or any other source without proper citation of the source(s). See the [Student Conduct Code](#).

### **Auditing Classes**

Auditing a course allows a student to continue attending the lectures and/or laboratories and discussion sessions associated with the course, but the student will not earn a grade for any component of the course. Students who audit a course receive the same educational experience as students taking the course for a grade, but will be excused from exams, assessments, and other evaluative measures that serve the primary purpose of assigning a grade.

### **Classroom Conduct**

Students have a responsibility to conduct themselves in class and in the libraries in ways that do not interfere with the rights of other students to learn, or of instructors to teach. Use of devices such as pagers and cellular phones, or potentially disruptive activities are only permitted with the prior explicit consent of the instructor. Students are specifically prohibited to record classes without instructor authorization, including online/remote classes (either audio only, or video and audio). The instructor may rescind permission at any time during the class. If a student does not comply with established requirements or obstructs the functioning of the class, the instructor may initiate an administrative withdrawal of the student from the course.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic forced most instruction to be delivered remotely starting on March 2020, numerous students have asked instructors to record their synchronous classes, so that they can access them at their convenience. Instructors who agree to record their classes (audio only, or video and audio) should inform students in advance. Recorded lectures may not be broadly released to anyone, but made available exclusively to those students enrolled in the class during the particular academic term. Recorded lectures must be stored securely, and are subject to the Nevada System of Higher Education's Records Retention Policy, meaning that the recordings can only be deleted 120 days after the end of class (i.e., after grades are posted). Once this requirement is met, the recordings should be deleted. Class recordings are protected from disclosure, as they are deemed part of an educational record under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

## Copyright

The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with, and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The University will neither protect nor defend you, nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional [copyright policy information](#).

## Disability Resource Center (DRC)

The [UNLV Disability Resource Center](#) (SSC-A, Room 143, <https://www.unlv.edu/drc>, telephone 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. Students who believe that they may need academic accommodations due to injury, disability, or due to pregnancy should contact the DRC as early as possible in the academic term. A Disabilities Specialist will discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours, so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

## Final Examinations

The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur on the date and at the time specified in the Final Exam schedule. The Final Exam schedule is typically available at the start of the semester, and the classroom locations are available approximately one month before the end of the semester. See the [Final Exam Schedule](#).

## Identity Verification in Online Courses

All UNLV students must use their Campus-issued ACE ID and password to log in to WebCampus-Canvas.

UNLV students enrolled in online or hybrid courses are expected to read and adhere to the [Student Academic Misconduct Policy](#), which states that “acting or attempting to act as a substitute for another, or using or attempting to use a substitute, in any academic evaluation or assignment” is a form of academic misconduct. Intentionally sharing ACE login credentials with another person may be considered an attempt to use a substitute, and could result in investigation and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Academic Misconduct Policy.

UNLV students enrolled in online courses are also expected to read and adhere to the [Acceptable Use of Computing and Information Technology Resources Policy](#), which prohibits sharing university accounts with other persons without authorization.

To the greatest extent possible, all graded assignments and assessments in UNLV online courses should be hosted in WebCampus-Canvas or another UNLV-managed platform that requires ACE login credentials for access.

## Incomplete Grades

The grade of “I” (Incomplete) may be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session, but cannot complete the last part of the course for

reason(s) beyond the student's control and acceptable to the instructor, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. For undergraduate courses, the incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester. Graduate students receiving "I" grades in 500-, 600-, or 700-level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the period indicated, a grade of "F" will be recorded, and the student's GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete grade do not register for the course, but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the "I" grade.

### **Library Resources**

Librarians are available to consult with students on research needs, including developing research topics, finding information, and evaluating sources. To make an appointment with a subject expert for this class, please visit the [Libraries' Research Consultation](#) website. You can also [ask the library staff](#) questions via chat and text message.

### **Missed Classwork**

Any student missing class, quizzes, examinations, or any other class or laboratory work because of observance of religious holidays will be given an opportunity during that semester to make up the missed work. The make-up opportunity will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor within the first 14 calendar days of the course for Fall and Spring courses (except for modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for Summer and modular courses, of their intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit the Missed Work policy, under Registration Policies, on the [Academic Policies](#) webpage.

In accordance with the policy approved by the Faculty Senate regarding missed class time and assignments, students who represent UNLV in any official extracurricular activity will also have the opportunity to make up assignments, provided that the student provides official written notification to the instructor no less than one week prior to the missed class(es).

The spirit and intent of the policy for missed classwork is to offer fair and equitable assessment opportunities to all students, including those representing the University in extracurricular activities. Instructors should consider, for example, that in courses which offer a "Drop one" option for the lowest assignment, quiz, or exam, assigning the student a grade of zero for an excused absence for extracurricular activity is both contrary to the intent of the Faculty Senate's policy, and an infringement on the student's right to complete all work for the course.

This policy will not apply in the event that completing the assignment or administering the examination at an alternate time would impose an undue hardship on the instructor or the University that could be reasonably avoided. There should be a good faith effort by both the instructor and the student to agree to a reasonable resolution. When disagreements regarding this policy arise, decisions can be appealed to the Department Chair/School Director, College/School Dean, and/or the Faculty Senate Academic Standards Committee.

For purposes of definition, extracurricular activities may include, but are not limited to: academic recruitment activities, competitive intercollegiate athletics, fine arts activities, liberal arts competitions, science and engineering competitions, and any other event or activity sanctioned by a College/School Dean, and/or by the Executive Vice President and Provost.

### **Rebelmail**

Rebelmail is UNLV's official email system for students and by University policy, instructors and staff should only send emails to students' Rebelmail accounts. Rebelmail is one of the primary ways in which students receive official University communications, information about deadlines, major Campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the University. Emailing within WebCampus-Canvas is also acceptable.

### **Tutoring and Coaching**

The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring, academic success coaching, and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, please visit the [ASC website](#), or call 702-895-3177. The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of SSC A, Room 254. Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library, and on the second floor of the College of Engineering building (TBE A 207).

### **UNLV Writing Center**

One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the [Writing Center](#), located in the Central Desert Complex, Building 3, Room 301 (CDC 3-301). Walk-in consultations are sometimes available, but students with appointments receive priority assistance. Students may make appointments in person or by calling the Center, telephone 702-895-3908. Students are requested to bring to their appointments their Rebel ID Card, a copy of the instructions for their assignment, and two copies of any writing they have completed on their assignment.

### **Diversity Statement**

As an institution of higher learning, UNLV represents a rich diversity of human beings among its faculty, staff, and students, and is committed to aspiring to maintain a Campus environment that values that diversity. Accordingly, the University supports understanding and appreciation of all members of its community, regardless of race, sex, age, color, national origin, ethnicity, creed, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, marital status, pregnancy, genetic information, veteran status, or political affiliation. Please see [University Statements and Compliance](#).

A successful learning experience requires mutual respect and trust between the students and the instructor. Accordingly, the instructor asks that students be willing to listen to one another's points of view, acknowledging that there may be disagreements, keep discussion and comments on topic, and use first person, positive language when expressing their perspectives.

[Academic Policies](#)

[Student Services & Activities](#)

[University Policies](#)

[University Community & Libraries](#)

## **Reading Schedule**

### **Week 1 – The “Rhetoric of Wreck”**

June 8 – Class introduction – The Mis-education of the Hip Hop Head

June 9 – Pough, Gwendolyn D., *Check It While I Wreck It*, Chapter 1 (15-40) – Theorizing Race, Rap, Gender, and the Public Sphere

June 10 – Pough, *Check It While I Wreck It*, Chapter 3 (75-102) – The Rhetoric of Wreck

June 11 – Iandoli, Kathy, *God Save the Queens*, Intro, Chapters 1-3 (1-5; 19-45) – Founding Mothers of Hip Hop

June 12 – Iandoli, *God Save the Queens*, Chapters 4-6 and interlude (48-84) – Rivalry and Early Market Pressures

### **Week 2 – Hip Hop (& Feminism)**

June 15 – Wallace, Michele, “When Black Feminism Faces the Music, and the Music Is Rap;” Pareles, Jon, “The Women Who Talk Back in Rap;” Mills, David, “Sister Souljah’s Call to Arms; The Rapper Says the Riots Were Payback. Are You Paying Attention?” – The Sister Souljah Moment

June 16 – Rose, Tricia, *Black Noise* Chapter 5 (146-175) – Theorizing Black Women Rappers

June 17 – Rose, Chapter 5 cont. (175-182); Morgan, “hip-hop feminist,” *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*, 27-62. – Hip Hop Feminism?

June 18 – Iandoli, *God Save the Queens*, Chapters 7-8 (85-112) – A Feminine Touch in the Gangsta World?

June 19 – Iandoli, *God Save the Queens*, Chapters 9, 10, and interlude (115-147); Morgan, “The Bad Girls of Hip Hop: Their Sweet Success Brings Home Bitter Truths” (1997) – Harlot or Heroine?

Happy Juneteenth!

### **Week 3 – Negotiating Public Spaces for Women**

June 22 – Moynihan, Daniel Patrick, “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action” [The Moynihan Report], Chapters 1-4 (1-45) – The Tangle of Pathology?

June 23 – Perry, Imani, *Prophets of the Hood*, Chapter 6, part 1 (155-175) – Maneuvers toward Gender Liberation

June 24 – Iandoli, *God Save the Queens*, Chapter 13 (173-183); Morgan *She Begat This*, 74-89 – Lauryn Hill and Motherhood

June 25 – Clay, Andreana, “‘I Used to be Scared of the Dick’: Queer Women of Color and Hip-Hop Masculinity;” Keyes, Cheryl L., “Ain’t Nuthin’ but a She Thang,” only read page 319 – Queer Women and Hip Hop

June 26 – Esposito, Jennifer and Bettina Love, “More Than a Video Ho: Hip Hop as a Site of Sex Education About Girls’ Sexual Desires.” – Does Hip Hop Empower Women?

### **Week 4 – The Visibility of Female Rappers**

June 29 – Fleetwood, Nicole R., “Excess Flesh: Black Women Performing Hypervisibility,” (105-113; 132-145) – The Hypervisibility of Black Women

June 30 – Iandoli, *God Save the Queens*, Chapters 11, 12, 14, 15 (149-172, 193-210) – First Ladies and the Impeccable Missy Elliot

July 1 – Iandoli, *God Save the Queens*, Chapters 16, 17, and interlude (213-242) – Sex (Still) Sells

July 2 – Iandoli, *God Save the Queens*, Chapters 18, 19 (243-270) – Rap Meets the Internet

July 3 – Independence Day

**Week 5 – The Re-education of the Hip Hop Head**

July 6 – Iandoli, *God Save the Queens*, Chapter 20, Outro, Epilogue (271-298) – And the No. 1 Female Rapper is...

July 7 – Final Presentations

July 8 – Final Presentations

July 9 – Final Presentations

July 10 – Final Presentations & Denouement