



Banksy, "Gangsta Rat" (2004)

Race, Rap and Power

"Every time I speak I want the truth to come out. Every time I speak I want a shiver. I don't want them to be like they know what I'm gonna say because it's polite. I'm not saying I'm gonna rule the world or I'm gonna change the world, but I guarantee you that I will spark the brain that will change the world." — Tupac Shakur, MTV, 1994

"Rap is black America's CNN." Chuck D

*The hurt becomes repetition, the love almost lost that
Sick venom in men and women overcome with pride
A perfect world is never perfect, only filled with lies
Promises are broken and more resentment come alive
Race barriers make inferior you and I
"Pride" Kendrick Lamar*

**Summer 2019 -- Online
June 3 - July 26, 2019
Georgetown University**

Instructor: Ellen Gorman
E-mail: elg27@georgetown.edu

Required Texts:

It's Bigger Than Hip-Hop: The Rise of the Post Hip-Hop Generation, MK Asante
Hip-Hop Revolution: The Culture and Politics of Rap, Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar
Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip Hop, Adam Bradley

YouTube Playlist – "ENGL 189"

Films/Television: *I Am Not Your Negro* (2017); *Do the Right Thing* (1989); *Juice* (1992); *Straight Outta Compton* (2015); *Empire* (Season 1, 2015); *Atlanta* (Season 1, 2016)

What relationship does the political power of the Hip Hop movement have to the corporatization of rap as a genre, and how has that affected racial politics in America in the last thirty years? We will look at a wide variety of texts in this course, including literature, film, lyrics and video in order to discuss Hip Hop and Rap as aesthetic movements and genres, and how they are viewed as both empowering and marginalizing in their commodification in the US.

In this course you will be asked to read and then to think critically about what you have read. You will also be asked to articulate and make claims about your interpretations in your writing, and participate in collaborative discussions, class debates and a one-on-one discussion with the instructor during the eight week period.

The overall frame around any of our inquiries in this course is the development of critical thinking and writing skills. You will be asked to submit two formal written assignments: a rhetorical critique and a researched argument, both of which are designed to serve as opportunities for you to refine your argumentative writing and further your confidence in your own voices and opinions.

List of assignments and percentage of grade

Assignment #1/Artist Critique	
10% Assignment #2/ Annotated Playlist	
15%	
Response Papers (8 x 5% each)	40%
One-on-One Discussion	5%
Discussion Board Assignments (4 @ 5% each)	
20% Debate (2 x 5% each - Canvas Discussion Forum)	
10%	

General Policies

Grading

All assignments are to be posted to the Canvas site for the course on the due date. Grades for assignments one day late will be dropped one full grade; assignments two days late will be dropped two full grades. A grade of "No Credit" will be given for assignments later than two days late.

Formal Assignments

Assignments should conform to MLA-style format and be typed, double-spaced, in a 12-point font, and paginated with the author's name on each page on the top right hand side. For more specific information see the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* and <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>.

All students are encouraged to avail themselves of the free services at the University's Writing Center: <http://www.georgetown.edu/departments/english/writing/wcenter.html>.

Response Papers

You will need to submit eight (8) informal response papers – one a week - by the end of the course. Due dates for these responses are available on the Assignments tab on our Canvas site for the course.

Each response should be no less than 1,000 words total, but may exceed that length.

Do not summarize, only respond to and engage with each of the texts for the week in the response, using an informal voice and "I" throughout each response. More detailed criteria are listed on the "Assignments" tab for each response.

Since you are responding to texts provided for the course, there is no need to cite anything in these response papers, and as a general rule, do not include outside sources in your responses. I am asking you to think closely and critically about only these texts.

No late submissions will be accepted.

Canvas Discussion Board Forum and Debate Assignments

You will be asked to respond to a prompt and then engage with your classmates via the Canvas Discussion Board format four times during the course and in a similar format for two debates. Dates are on the schedule and will require completion deadlines. These discussions/debates are designed to encourage thoughtful and productive engagement among the classes that otherwise will never meet as a group, and to enable everyone in the class to articulate opinions and make points about the material in the course and how they are relating it to their lived experiences while taking it.

One-on-One Online Discussion with Instructor

By the sixth week of the course, each student will need to have scheduled and completed an online videoconference with the instructor to discuss thoughts about the course, address questions and engage about the material s/he has read thus far. This videoconference can be scheduled via email at a time amenable to both the instructor and the student via FaceTime, Skype, Zoom or whatever platform works best.

University Policies

All Georgetown University policies, as stated in the Undergraduate Bulletin, will be observed: <http://www.georgetown.edu/undergrad/bulletin/>.

All students are required to be aware of the University's Honor Code regulations: <http://www.georgetown.edu/undergrad/bulletin/regulations6.html#standards>.

If you believe that you have a disability that will affect your performance in this class, please contact the Academic Resource Center (<http://academicsupport.georgetown.edu/>) for further information. The center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

Georgetown University and its faculty are committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including relationship violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault. University policy requires faculty members to report any disclosures about sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the University's response to sexual misconduct. Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources who can provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct.

These resources include Jen Schweer, MA, LPC, Associate Director of Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention, (202) 687-0323 (jls242@georgetown.edu) and Erica Shirley, Trauma Specialist Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS), (202) 687-6985 (els54@georgetown.edu).

More information about campus resources and reporting sexual misconduct can be found

at <http://sexualassault.georgetown.edu>.

Sensitive Material

At times this semester we will be discussing events and issues that may be disturbing, even traumatizing, to some students. If you ever feel the need to step outside during one of these discussions, either for a short time or for the rest of the class session, you may always do so without academic penalty. (You will, however, be responsible for any material you miss. If you do leave the room for a significant time, please make arrangements to get notes from another student or see me individually.

SCHEDULE

MODULE 1

June 3 – 9

“the racial nightmare”

Read: Cornel West, excerpt from *Race Matters*

Frantz Fanon, from *Black Skin, White Masks*

Excerpt from *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander

“How Homeownership Became the Engine of American Inequality” – Matthew Desmond, *NewYorkTimes.com*

Listen: “Teju Cole on Blackface” – *The New Yorker* Podcast

Read: “The Case for Reparations” - Ta-Nehisi Coates, *TheAtlantic.com*

Read: “The Pain We Still Need to Feel” – Jamelle Bouie, *Slate.com*

Watch: “An Artist’s Unflinching Look at Racial Violence – Sanford Biggers” – Ted.com

Look at: “At Brooklyn Museum, Sanford Biggers Explores Symbols of Race in America” – ArtsObserver.com

Watch videos/Read lyrics at *Genius.com*:

“Fuck tha Police” – N.W.A.

“Scenario” – A Tribe Called Quest

“99 Problems” – Jay-Z

“M.A.A.D. City (Feat. MC eihht)” – Kendrick Lamar

Discussion Board Forum #1 – Open from June 6 – 9, 9:00 pm

EST Response Paper #1 due June 9 at 6:00 p.m. EST

MODULE 2

June 10 – 16

“The Fire Next Time”

Screen *I Am Not Your Negro* (Sharestream)

Quick bio of Baldwin: http://www.myblackhistory.net/James_Baldwin.htm

Read *The Fire Next Time*, James Baldwin (excerpt)

Read/Interact: “The Faces of American Power” -

Haeyoung Park, Josh Keller and Josh Williams, *TheNewYorkTimes.com*

Watch video: VICE: “Charlottesville: Race and Terror” – *Vice.com*

Listen to Podcast – “Pod Save the People: Charlottesville,” DeRay McKesson: <https://overcast.fm/+I9KtSkvdw>

Read speech: “Mayor Mitch Landrieu's speech on removing New Orleans' Confederate monuments” –

Nola.com

Watch: “Grammys 2016: Watch Kendrick Lamar's stunning performance – Micah Singleton, *TheVerge.com*

Watch: “Meek Mill, Miguel debut powerful song 'Stay Woke' about race, incarceration at BET Awards” – Erin Jensen, *USAToday.com*

Watch videos/Read lyrics at Genius.com:

"The Story of OJ" – Jay-Z

"Strange Fruition" – Lupe Fiasco

"Paranoia" – **Chance** the Rapper

Response Paper #2 due June 16 at 6:00 p.m. EST

MODULE 3

June 17 – 23

“What You Hear Is Not a Test”

Watch: “Hip Hop Is...” (YouTube): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kcol418ds_0&t=1448s

Read: “The Culture of Hip-Hop” – Michael Eric Dyson, *That’s the Joint*

Read: “Jalal Mansur Nuriddin, ‘Grandfather of Rap,’ Is Dead at 73” – Giovanni Russonello, *TheNewYorkTimes.com*;

Read: *The Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip Hop*

Watch videos/Read lyrics at *Genius.com*:

“I Ain’t No Joke” – Eric B. & Rakim

“I’m Bad” - LL Cool J

“Walk This Way” – Run DMC

**Discussion Board Forum #2 – Open from June 20 – 23, 9:00 pm
EST Response Paper #3 due June 23 at 6:00 p.m. EST**

MODULE 4

June 24 – 30

Public Enemy

Read: *It’s Bigger Than Hip Hop*

Listen to interview with MK Asante: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4QDoGKG050>

Screen *Straight Outta Compton*

Check out online journals: *XXL.mag.com*; *AllHipHop.com*; *Vibe.com*; *SOHH.com*;

Watch videos/Read lyrics at *Genius.com*:

“Gin and Juice” – Snoop Dogg

“Power” – Ice-T

“The World is Yours” – Nas

“C.R.E.A.M.” – Wu-Tang Clan

“Nuthin’ But A G Thang” - Dr. Dre ft. Snoop Doggy Dogg

**Debate #1 – Open from June 27 – June 30, 9:00 pm
EST Response Paper #4 due June 30 at 6:00 p.m. EST
Artist Critique Due June 30 at 10:00 p.m. EST**

MODULE 5

July 1 – 7

“Do the Right Thing”

Read: *Hip-Hip Revolution*

Screen *Do the Right Thing*

Read: “On This Day in Hip Hop History: “Do the Right Thing”: XXLmag.com;

<https://www.xxlmag.com/news/2016/06/do-the-right-thing-theaters/>

Read: “Fight the Power”: Hip Hop and Civil Unrest in Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*” - Casarae L. Gibson, *Black Camera*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Spring 2017), pp. 183-207

Watch/Listen to video/Read lyrics at Genius.com:

"Fight the Power" – Public Enemy

"Who Got the Camera" – Ice Cube

"4-If I Ruled The World", Nas feat. Lauryn Hill

"White America" – Eminem

Discussion Board Forum #3 – Open from July 4 - 7 9:00 pm

EST Response Paper #5 due July 7 at 6:00 p.m. EST

MODULE 6

JULY 8 – 14

"Changes"

Read: "No Time for Fake Niggas: Hip-Hop Culture and the authenticity Debates" – Mark Anthony Neal, *That's the Joint*

Read: "True Colors: Race, And The Misnomer Of Hip Hop As 'Black Music'" – Omar Burgess, *HipHopDX.com*

Read: "Killer Mike's Supreme Court Brief: - Gilad Edelman, *TheNewYorker.com*

Read: "8 Ways Tupac Shakur Changed the World" – *RollingStone.com*

Watch: "Race and Equality: Tupac Interview" – YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhXQ_rEGVFc

Read: "To Die Like a Gangsta" – Robert Sam Anson, *VanityFair.com*

"The Meaning of Biggie: On Life After Death" – Dean Van Nguyen, *ConsequenceofSound.net*

Watch: Biggie & Tupac (YouTube)

Screen Juice

Watch/Listen to video/Read lyrics at Genius.com:

"Hypnotize" and "Mo Money, Mo Problems" – Biggie Smalls

"Changes" and "Dear Mama" – Tupac Shakur

Response Paper #6 due July 14 at 6:00 p.m. EST

MODULE 7

July 15 – 21

"We Run This"

Read: "Black Youth and the Ironies of Capitalism" – S. Craig Watkins, *That's the Joint*

Read: "An Exploration of Spectacular Consumption: Gangsta Rap as Cultural Commodity" – Eric K. Watts, *That's the Joint*

Read: "How Corporate Hip-Hop Profits From Rape Culture" – Kirsten West Savali, *TheRoot.com*;

Read: "Pop music's race problem: How white artists profit from mocking hip-hop" – Daniel D'Addario,

Salon.com;

Read: "The Disturbing, Surprisingly Complex Relationship Between White Identity Politics and Racism" –

Isaac Chotiner, *NewYorker.com*:

Screen *Empire*, Season 1, Episodes 1 & 2

Read: "Black Empires, White Desires" – Davarian L. Baldwin, *That's the Joint*

Screen *Atlanta*, Season 1, Episodes 1, 2 & 3

"What Does Atlanta Hip-Hop Think of 'Atlanta' the Show?" – Christina Lee, *Pitchfork.com*

Watch videos/Read lyrics at Genius.com:

"Respiration" – Blackstar ft. Common, Mos Def, Talip Kweli

"Smuckers" – Tyler the Creator;

"You Grew Up" – Oddisee

"Get Ur Freak ON" – Missy Elliott

"Last Hope", DMX;

"New Slaves" – Kanye West;

Debate #2 – Open from July 18 – July 21, 9:00 pm

EST Response Paper #7 due July 21 at 6:00 p.m. EST

MODULE 8

July 21 – 28

"Alright"

Read: "The Improbable Story of How Kendrick Lamar's 'Alright' Became a Protest Anthem" – Jamilah King, *Mic.com*

View: "11 Great Hip Hop Protest Songs" – *Vibe.com*:

Read: "Black Lives Matter's DeRay Mckesson on the Power of Protest Music" – Marc Hogan, *Pitchfork.com*

Watch: "Common Addresses Race in Hip Hop" – YouTube

Read: "Big Sean Compares Himself To Civil Rights Activists Throughout 'Double Or Nothing'" – Eddie Fu, *Genius.com*;

Read: "This Week, 2 Rappers Proved They Know Nothing About Racism and Live in Imaginary Post-Racial Worlds" – Yesha Callahan, *TheRoot.com*;

Read: "Sorry Jay Z, You're just Flat Out Wrong" - Kim Trent, *Detroit Free Press*

Read: "Rap's fraught history with Black Lives Matter: 'I didn't sign up to be no activist'" – Sheldon Pearce, *TheGuardian.com*

Read: "I'm a black ex-cop, and this is the real truth about race and policing" – Reddit Hudson, *Vox.com*

"Young Moose: Baltimore rapper's rising star slowed by run-ins with law" – Baynard Woods, *TheGuardian.com*

"21 Savage on ICE Detention, the Grammys and His Uncertain Future" – Jon Caramanica,

TheNewYorkTimes.com

Read: "'I'm Not Black, I'm Kanye'" – Ta-Nehisi Coates, *TheAtlantic.com*

"Jay Z: 'The War on Drugs Is an Epic Fail'" – Asha Bandele, *TheNewYorkTimes.com*

"Chance the Rapper Buys Chicagoist Website, He Announces in New Single" – Todd Spangler, *Variety.com*

Watch videos/Read lyrics at Genius.com:

"Alright" – Kendrick Lamar

"Land of the Free" – Joey BadA\$\$

"This is America" – Childish Gambino

Response Paper #8 due July 28 at 6:00 p.m. EST

Discussion Board Forum #4 – Open from July 25 - 28, 9:00 pm

EST Annotated Playiist Due July 30, 10:00 p.m. EST