

BLST 206:
“Black Sexualities and Resistance”
Professor Omise’eke Tinsley
Winter 2022

“When I saw all of the politicians in an uproar about mine and Cardi’s ‘WAP’, I was just really taken back. Why would anyone be mad about my ‘WAP’? It belongs to me.”
--Megan Thee Stallion

As Megan Thee Stallion’s tongue-in-cheek question suggests, creative expressions of Black sexuality—especially Black women’s declarations of erotic autonomy—are always already marked as deviant, at once *too much* and *not enough*. *Too many* African American teens have babies and *too many* Jamaicans are homophobic, *not enough* Black women get married and *not enough* Caribbean men are monogamous: rooted in the fictions of chattel slavery, these sexual scripts continually confront African American and Caribbean folks’ attempts to use our bodies as if (in Megan’s words) they “belong to” us. This course explores how creative Black sexual expressions pressure, explode, and re-configure dominant formulations of gender and sexuality throughout the African Americas. We engage texts that explore historical and contemporary sexualities in the Caribbean, South America, and North America, and represent (inter)disciplines including anthropology, literature, history, feminist studies, queer studies, and cultural studies. Through these engagements, we explore how Black sexualities form in relation to acts of domination and/or resistance, injury and/or creativity, subjugation and/or pleasure. Approaching complicated answers to Megan’s simple question, we interrogate how and why erotic autonomy is necessary to the ongoing Black project of freedom.

Readings

Have We Ever Been Straight? Against Black Heteronormativity

Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals*
Sistren, *Lionheart Gal*

Loving our Own Blackfullness: Against Black Homonormativity

Gloria Wekker, *The Politics of Passion: Women’s Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora*

Jafari Sinclaire Allen, *There’s A Disco Ball Between Us: A Theory of Black Gay Life*

Free to Marry?: Black Marriage and/as Acts of Freedom

Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic world*

Cynthia McLeod, *The Free Negress Elizabeth*

Love, Multiplied: Polyamory and Black Resistance

Nalo Hopkinson, *The Salt Roads*

L.H. Stallings, *Funk the Erotic: Transaesthetics and Black Sexual Cultures*

“But You’re Black”: Black Asexuality and the Right to Love

Ianna Hawkins Owen, selected essays

Claire Kann, *Let's Talk About Love*