

LMC 2450 Syllabus

Introduction to Black Media Studies

Black Media, Pop Culture, and the Last 50+ Years of Hip Hop

Fall Semester 2026

Joycelyn Wilson, PhD

Email: drjoyce@gatech.edu

Office Hours: 2-3, held virtually on Zoom Wednesday or by appointment

NOTE: The course is delivered through face-to-face instruction, with the integration of independent preparation and group assignment/design studio days. Elements of the syllabus and course schedule are subject to adjustment based on those made by the Institute due to any other extenuating circumstances.

General Course Description

Introduces scholarship and practices in Black Media Studies (BMS), which studies the relationships among media, culture, and racial politics by and about people of African descent.

Topical Course Description

Introduction to Black Media Studies is a survey and research-based course that explores practices and representations of Blackness and Black people in the media. We will study how media platforms create, portray, market, curate, and preserve messages and representations of African Americans and Blackness through culture-producing industries such as music, commercials, reality shows, narrative film, television, gaming, podcasts, and social media.

This semester features an expanded focus on the contributions, representation, and media strategies of Black women artists across the African diaspora—including Tems, SZA, Erykah Badu, Queen Latifah, Megan Thee Stallion, Missy Elliott, Lauryn Hill, and Beyoncé—alongside analysis of current and newsworthy moments in Black media culture. Students will connect these case studies to foundational scholarship, concepts, and theories in BMS while investigating intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, and age.

Through class discussions, discussion posts, and seminar presentations, students will develop the tools to interrogate representations of Black people in media and assess the sociocultural and geopolitical forces that shape them. The course will also examine the complex dialogue between Black media representations and the lived cultural, social, and historical experiences of people of African descent. We will explore how Black individuals, groups, and communities operate as cultural producers, consumers, and subjects of media discourses, and how Black media circulates locally and globally.

A Note on HipHop50

We will continue to use Hip Hop's 50-year history as a case study for understanding the media's role in shaping Black cultural narratives. This includes the history of music, film, news, radio, and television in relationship to Hip Hop's political and pop culture influence. This year's course will also highlight the entrepreneurial, creative, and activist work of Black women in Hip Hop and R&B, and integrate analysis of live, ongoing media moments—such as award shows, viral performances, brand partnerships, controversies, and tributes—into our weekly discussions.

The course materials include curated readings in addition to a select group of visual, textual, archival, and digital media resources that will frame the “access points” and media products used to reach learning outcomes and course objectives.

Course Prerequisite: English 1101, 1102

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

The primary objective for the course is for student to exit with the language to communicate a fundamental understanding of contemporary forms of Black cultural representation and expression as they are revealed via media industries and platforms; how Black media create and are created by other cultural constructs; implications of how media functions as a technology of communication, representation, and education while also serving as a major exporter of communicative practices and pedagogical performances that are (re)produced across media for transglobal consumption.

Course Goals

- By the end of this course, students will:
 - Understand the historical and sociocultural foundations of Black media and cultural production in America.
 - Examine the production and influence of Black media through the lens of Hip Hop and its intersections with television, film, news, radio, and digital platforms.
 - Analyze the contributions of Black women artists to music, media, and cultural representation, and evaluate how gender and intersectionality shape media narratives.
 - Study communicative practices of Black media in and out of Hip Hop’s influence, exploring its role in innovation and cultural exportation.
 - Apply BMS frameworks to assess current media events and connect them to historical contexts.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Students will compare and contrast the meaning of major texts from both Western and non-Western cultures.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to analyze and apply critical readings and perspectives from multiple disciplines to media presented in and outside of the class.
- Students will apply knowledge of historical, social, and cultural influences to understanding a works of art as media.
- Students will demonstrate mastery of key concepts, themes, questions, and ideas related to the history, aesthetics, culture, and politics of Black media by examining the media from the perspectives of production, consumption, marketing, and interpretive strategies.
- Students will make informed judgments about art forms from various cultures including their own culture.
- Students will critically analyze Black cultural representations, productions, performances, and discourses and how they impact their understanding of Black media studies as an area of inquiry.
- Students will recognize themselves as participants in a particular culture and see how this impacts their experiences and values.

- Students will demonstrate the ability to think, read, write, and speak critically about the concepts of race, gender, ethnicity and sexuality, exploring how these concepts relate to other social categories such as class, nation, age, etc.; and how these constructs impact Black media production and interpretation.
- Students will understand the ways that culture and media shape ethical views.

Foundations of the Course

The course maintains its three-pronged foundation:

1. **Historical Analysis** – Cultural texts, documentary film, podcasts, and archival materials from the 19th to 21st centuries, with emphasis on late 1990s–present.
2. **Interpretive Frameworks & Ethnographic Methods** – Concepts and practices for analyzing Black media as cultural and pedagogical performance.
3. **Media Production & Team-Building** – Collaborative assignments and creative remix projects to reimagine media representations.

GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Preparation. The mode of instruction for the course is in-person, which will include the integration of preparation days and design studio time. The face-to-face meetings will always take place on Thursday. Content preparation days are sprinkled throughout the course and generally held on Tuesday. The course resources are curated with a set of pedagogical experiences structured around a reading, writing, listening, viewing, and discussion schedule that you will be expected to **ACTIVELY** meet and participate in. You may also be assigned presentations as they relate to discussion topics, posts, and the final semester assignment. **See Canvas files for a detailed rubric for how participation will be assessed throughout the semester.**

An **open mind** is your most important tool for this course. Film and music, for example – particularly as a media for expressing ideas – can sometimes challenge a viewer's comfort zone, therefore sparking critical interrogation of the material and one's thoughts on the material. A commitment to engaging with the material is another requirement for success in the course. **(In this course, success = academic/intellectual growth, personal development).** Doing so will keep you connected to the topics and help you develop an informed opinion that is substantiated by the research.

The number one rule is preparation. Utilize the assigned preparation time, and come to class on-time ready. On days we meet virtually, be sure to login on-time, with video on, and ready to participate in our scheduled discussions. In addition to the schedule attached, students may receive a weekly update preceding the next class meeting. This agenda will announce updates on readings, assignments, preparations, due dates, and any adjustments I have made to the schedule. **I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO ADJUST THE SCHEDULE WHERE I DEEM NECESSARY FOR THE OVERALL SUCCESS OF THE COURSE.**

The number two rule is to push yourself out of your comfort zones as there will be many times the content will challenge your thinking.

How to engage with the media. For each week, notice I list the readings first, then the screenings, and then whatever listening assignment. Please follow this recipe to maximize your engagement with the supporting materials. You will also need to have access to two main sites: Genius.com to follow the

lyrics, and Whosampled.com to understand the chemistry of the sounds. You will also need access to Netflix, YouTube, tubi, the History Makers Digital Archive, and in some cases, Amazon Prime.

As it relates to the film and music, I suggest you watch and listen during a time that allows you an opportunity to immerse yourself in the content. For example, I like to listen to music and podcasts when I clean up, when I am driving, or when I am doing something on the computer. I also love to put on my headphones and lay back. It allows me to deeply engage with the production. I suggest you create an approach that considers these pointers. You may also listen to the music while following along with its lyrics on Genius.com. This will help guide your interaction as well. Give yourself time to engage and reflect from beginning to end. Some products need attention from beginning to end as the productions often follow a 3-act story in the same way you might read a novel from cover to cover.

Engage Purposefully and Strategically. The course curates a substantial experience that includes readings, screenings, and listening assignments. If you haven't already, you are going to need to learn to read strategically. Sometimes it is impossible to read a lengthy article or a book from cover to cover, digesting every word. I suggest two books to help you develop this skill: Miriam Sweeney's How to Read for Grad School or Larry Cebula's How to Read a Book in One Hour. Ultimately, learning to do this kind of reading is one of the most important skills you can pick up as an undergraduate student.

Attendance. Attendance is absolutely vital to your success in my class. Attendance will be noted on the scheduled days we meet. If you have more than three unexcused absences, chronic tardiness, failure to have read enough to engage in the discussions, and other disruptions will be considered an absence and as apathy towards the class and the material. Students who are absent because of participation in approved Institute activities (such as field trips, professional conferences, and athletic events) will be permitted to make up the work missed during their absences. Approval of such activities will be granted by the Student Academic and Financial Affairs Committee of the Academic Senate, and statements of the approved absence may be obtained from the Office of the Registrar (<https://catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4/>). Each additional absence after the allotted number deducts one-third of a letter grade from your final grade.

Missing six (6) classes results in automatic failure of the class. Think ahead. If you know in advance that you must miss a class meeting be sure not to miss more than three others. If you need to leave a class session early, please try to inform me before the start of the session so that your departure can be minimally disruptive.

Responsibility for missed work. Students are responsible for contacting the instructor to find out what they missed while absent from class and how to make up missed work. **However, if you are not present to participate in a group presentation or the final group production and have not spoken to your group members to ensure your participation is included, you risk failing the course. DO NOT E-MAIL LATE ASSIGNMENTS TO MY GT ADDRESS. Email those to Canvas Inbox.**

Personal Electronics. My expectation is that your computer and mobile devices will be used for class participation purposes during our weekly seminars. We will all commit to an honor system here since there is no way for me to monitor this. If you are found to be using a device for any purpose unnecessary to the immediate conduct of the course, you will be marked absent for the day. **You may not, without my written consent, audio or video record my lectures.** All devices should remain on vibrate. Please keep them on mute when you are not speaking.

Social Media. Unless approved by me, there is to be no posting of the course to any of your personal social media channels or pages.

Please note that the Georgia Tech policy requires you to wait twenty minutes for the instructor to arrive before concluding that the class is not meeting (this policy is included here primarily for your information).

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Texts

- Assigned chapters, journal articles, and commentaries can be found on Canvas, the internet, or searchable through JSTOR.
- All required readings will be open access or provided directly in Canvas. No textbook purchase is required.

Required Platforms

Students will engage with media in and out of class via YouTube, Netflix, Prime, and other on-demand streaming services. Some films may also be available on Crackle and Tubi. Access to a **Netflix/Prime account is recommended** to screen assigned documentaries.

Students must also have access to: **Spotify, Apple Music, or another streaming platform** (free tier acceptable) for listening assignments.

DESCRIPTION OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Individual assignments

Media Analysis Posts (7 @ 10 points each)

Students are required to post to Canvas a written discussion post or video reaction to the weekly discussion thread.

- **Written posts:** no more than 2 paragraphs
- **Video posts:** no more than 2 minutes

Each post should:

- Raise key questions, concerns, arguments, or positions taken by the author or producer of the assigned media
- Explicitly apply **at least one OI principle** (Openminded Thinking/Open Accessibility, Uprightness, Truth/Transparency, Kinship/Kindness, Accountability/Agency/Authenticity, Sequence, Teach)
- Optionally, respond to another student's post (add to it, challenge it, but do not attack it)

Deadline: Posts are due **Tuesday 11:59pm** before Thursday's class to allow peers and the instructor to review before discussion.

Vocabulary Quiz (Week 4, 20 points)

A short in-class quiz to ensure comprehension of course vocabulary and concepts introduced in the first three weeks. Students will be expected to know definitions and be able to connect terms to the OI principles.

Mid-term Exam (50 points)

To give you an opportunity to demonstrate fundamental knowledge about the historical and sociological origins of Black media in American society, there will be a mid-term exam. Administered remotely via

Canvas during Week 9, the exam will cover readings, class discussions, videos, and in-class presentations.

- Format may include fill-in-the-blank, true/false, short answer, and essay questions.
- The exam **cannot be made up**.
- Students who read, attend class, and participate actively will be prepared to succeed.

Final Project (100 points)

To give you an opportunity to demonstrate fundamental knowledge about the historical and sociological origins of Black media in American society, there will be a final project. The final project will be completed as part of your assigned group. Each team will design and present a **multimedia analysis of a Black media campaign, artist, or artifact**.

Requirements:

- Integrate **at least 3 OI principles** into your analysis
- Reference **two or more media domains** (music, film, comedy, sports, fashion, or technology)
- Deliverable formats may include a live presentation, video essay, or multimedia website (guidelines provided on Canvas)
- Each group will present their project during the scheduled Final Exam session

Group Assignments

Seminar Presentations (20 points)

Each group will deliver a 15-minute presentation on an assigned reading. Presentations should:

- Go beyond summary — bring in **complementary examples** and connect to **contemporary Black media**
- Integrate **at least one OI principle** in the analysis
- Use visual and/or audio materials
- Optionally assign the class a short reading, viewing, or listening task (materials must be shared ahead of time)

If absent: Students must notify both the instructor and group members in advance.

Guest Speaker Reflections (4 (or 5) @ 10 points each)

For select guest lectures (e.g., Jaylen Brown, Bonsu Thompson, Ahmad Barber), students will complete:

- A **pre-visit assignment:** 2–3 questions they'd want to ask the guest (due before class)
- A **post-visit reflection:** 1 paragraph connecting the guest's talk to course themes and OI principles (due the following class)

Submission of Assignments Completed Using AI

In this class, your critical voice and perspective are essential. You may use AI tools (like ChatGPT) for brainstorming, outlining, or practice analysis. However, you must acknowledge any AI use in a brief statement at the end of your assignment. AI should never replace your own writing or analysis, especially on graded assignments like media analysis posts, exams, or final projects. Instead, treat AI as a tool whose limitations you are expected to critique. Misrepresentation of AI-generated work as your own is considered academic dishonesty.

GRADING SYSTEM

This course engages with music, film, television, podcasts, and other forms of Black media, but do not underestimate it as an “easy A.” The work you do here requires preparation, critical thinking, and creativity. You will be expected to meet deadlines, complete readings, and submit your very best work. Assignments should be free of typos and follow the rubric guidelines provided for each task.

Meeting only the *basic* requirements of an assignment will generally result in a **C**. Higher grades (**A** and **B**) are reserved for work that demonstrates:

- Clear application of course concepts and vocabulary
- Integration of the OI principles in analysis
- Original thought and creativity
- Critical engagement with readings, screenings, and listenings
- Evidence of revision, depth, and polish

I provide comments on your work through rubric feedback. You are expected to read and apply those comments to future assignments.

Potential Point Disbursements

This is a point-based grading system. Points are accumulated according to rubrics designated for each assignment.

- **Class Participation and Attendance: 100 points**
 - **Attendance (70 points):** 2.5 points per class session across 28 meetings.
 - **Engagement (30 points):** Evaluated 3x during the semester (early, mid, late) using a rubric that considers:
 - Frequency of contributions in discussion
 - Evidence of preparation (references to readings/media)
 - Respectful interaction with peers
 - Application of OI principles (Openmindedness, Accountability, Kinship, etc.)
- **Discussion Posts / Media Reactions: 70 points**
 - 7 posts at 10 points each. Must raise critical questions, connect to readings/viewings, or engage respectfully with classmates’ posts.
- **Guest Speaker Reflections: 40-50 points**

- 4 or 5 reflections @ 10 points each (depending on total number of speakers).
- Short written or video responses (1–2 paragraphs / 2 minutes).
- Should highlight a key takeaway, connect the speaker’s insights to course concepts or OI principles, and raise one lingering question.
- **Seminar Presentations: 20 points**
 - One group presentation at 20 points each. Value-added presentations should expand on readings, screenings, or listening assignments with new insights.
- **Mid-Term Exam: 50 points**
 - Assesses your ability to demonstrate knowledge of concepts, vocabulary, and interpretive frameworks. May include short answer, essay, and application-based questions.
- **Final Group Project: 100 points**
 - A culminating project that synthesizes your learning. Requires original analysis, creative design, and application of OI principles.

Total Possible Points: 380 (or 390, depending on a 5th speaker)

Grading Scale

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

- A 90-100%
- B 80-89%
- C 70-79%
- D 60-69%
- F 0-59%

COURSE SUPPORT AND SERVICES

The Communication Center

The Communication Center is located in Clough Commons, Suite 447. It is an excellent resource for any student (undergraduate or graduate) who wants help with a communication-related project. You can visit the center for help at any stage of the process for any project in any discipline. The tutors are available to help you develop and revise your projects. For information on making an appointment please visit this website: <http://communicationcenter.gatech.edu/content/make-appointment>. If you need assistance with the appointment system, you can call 404-385-3612 or stop by the center. All services are free and confidential.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND GUIDELINES

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic

Honor Code, please visit <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/> / [Links to an external site.](#)[Links to an external site.](#)or <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/> [Links to an external site.](#)[Links to an external site.](#) Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Attendance and/or Participation

Students are expected to come to class fully prepared to participate in class activities. At the same time, the GT' rules and regulations (<http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4/> [Links to an external site.](#)[Links to an external site.](#)) will be honored, which allow the absences due to the participations in institute activities, attendance in funerals, participation in particular religious observation, jury duties, etc.

Students who miss class due to illness or emergency should notify the instructor when they can and then should file an [IAA form](#) [Links to an external site.](#)[Links to an external site.](#)with the Registrar's Office. The instructor will be notified by e-mail if the absence is approved.

Learning Accommodations

Classroom accommodations will be made for students with disabilities. These accommodations must be arranged in advance and in accordance with the Office of Disability Services:

<http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>[Links to an external site.](#)[Links to an external site.](#)

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement: At Georgia Tech we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/> [Links to an external site.](#)[Links to an external site.](#)for an articulation of some basic expectation that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek.

COVID Guidelines

We will do our absolute best to keep ourselves and those in our classroom community safe. While it is not a mandate that you wear a mask, I strongly encourage you do for your own benefit and for the safety of those around you. I will be wearing my mask in class and during our lectures. Social distancing is also a CDC recommendation that we will do our best to meet. There are thirty-five students enrolled in the course. Please adhere to social distancing during in-person meetings. If you must ask me a question or speak with me before or after class, please mask and maintain six feet from me. My suggestion is that you also consider taking advantage of my office hours, which are held virtually on Tuesday from 2:00 - 3:00pm or by appointment.

While the CDC has dropped the requirement to quarantine if there's been exposure to the virus, please be mindful that the requirement is to where a mask for the five days. As a safety measure for us, I strongly encourage you to **stay home if you are sick, feel sick, think you might be sick, or think you have been exposed to COVID, the flu, MPX, or any viral infection that is highly-transmissible. You will not be penalized.** Let's all do our part to stay healthy and safe!

Jackets Moving Forward!

INFORMATION RE: PARTICIPATION

General Rubric for Class Participation:

A= 100-90 B= 89-80 C= 79-70 D = 69-60 F = 59 and below

A: Student consistently makes significant contributions to class discussion and group work. They are always engaged in class, whether actively taking notes, listening to peers or the instructor, speaking in class, or participating in group work. This student exemplifies maturity and collegiality.

B: Student generally contributes to class discussion and group work, takes notes, and listens to peers and the instructor.

C: Student sometimes takes notes and participates in group work, but is not consistently an active participant in class discussion and is often otherwise distracted or unfocused.

D: Student sits in class, generally without required reading, without taking notes, and without making contributions to discussion and/or group work.

F: Student does not show up to class consistently.

Some things that can decrease your class participation grade:

- - Being unprepared
 - Being disruptive or rude
 - Not listening to peers who speak in class
 - Not taking notes or otherwise appearing engaged
 - Texting/checking e-mail, social media, doing other classwork etc. in class

What does class participation mean?

Strong participation can seriously affect a borderline grade. In order to earn a strong participation grade, you are expected to come to every class prepared to present your analysis of the readings and media. Be sure to arrive on time everyday. Lateness is disrespectful and disrupts the momentum of the class discussion. Repeated tardiness will negatively impact your participation grade. Three or more unexcused absences will result in a failing participation grade. In order to have active, productive class participation you must meet the following minimum requirements:

- Attend all classes whether they are in-person or held remotely
- Arrive to class ON TIME
- Complete the engagement with the assigned resources BEFORE class
- Contribute your thoughts and ideas during class as part of the discussion
- Turn assignments in on time
- Remain attentive and focused throughout the class. Cell phone use is prohibited. Remain respectful towards the professor and peers at all times, even when in disagreement.

Participation is verbal interaction in class and requires more than simply attending class. Everyone is expected to make an effort to speak during every class. However, you are not invited to dominate the discussion. You are required to respect the contributions of your peers (talking out of turn, whispering, and snickering will not be tolerated). Participation is strongly emphasized because learning is active. We learn as much, if not more, from speaking and writing as we do from listening and reading. Therefore, participation in class will improve your performance in every other area of this course.

How do I critique an article or chapter for class discussion?

Your first responsibility in a critique is to make the best case for the author. Learn to read and listen critically and empathetically. Be able to convey what the author means rather than nit picking at words or taking their argument out of context. Identify what is useful and meaningful about their work and how it can be applied to other contexts and circumstances.

Critical analysis is the second step. This is your view of how the author's argument may be flawed and how it could be improved. The key to critical thinking is calling into question the assumptions and inferences that are the basis of the arguments presented and assessing the reliability of the evidence presented in the reading. While reading the material, ask what assumptions the author made to make her/his point. Next, suggest more effective alternatives to the author's argument and propose additional examples that might have supported it. Finally, present your own views clearly and concisely. Remember to try to engage in conversation rather than debate; learn from the author by acknowledging strong elements of their argument and assessing how these elements relate to your own position.

MODULE SCHEDULE

The semester is divided into TRACKS, each with its own set of modules.

Each module includes lecture topics, readings, screenings, and assignments for the week. **The dates in red indicate no class meeting on that particular day or week. The dates in green indicate an online class meeting. Dates that are in purple indicate an out-of-class independent prep or design/studio day.**

Full Module Schedule for Fall 2026 is located in Pages