

## **LMC 3405: Media, Culture & Society**

Blackness, Media & Meaning-Making in the 1990s

Fall 2026

Friday, 11:00 AM–1:45 PM

Office: Skiles 335b

Office Hours: By appointment

Email: [susana@gatech.edu](mailto:susana@gatech.edu)

Course Prerequisite: English 1102

Core Area/Attribute: C—Humanities

### **Course Description**

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This course focuses on the significance of Blackness in print, broadcast, and emerging digital media in the 1990s. Focusing on a few key social moments—the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill hearings, the Rodney King beating, trial, and subsequent protests, the O.J. Simpson trial, and the rise of mainstream hip hop—this course invites students to consider how Blackness was understood, shaped, and signified upon in the larger American imagination in the 1990s. To that end, we will examine a variety of media and literature to make sense of what these seminal events reveal about the 1990s and today.

### **Class Ethos**

We will actively participate in a classroom that is a safe space to share ideas freely and to challenge ourselves. Some of the material will be unfamiliar or perhaps even provocative terrain and it is important that we are cognizant and respectful of the rights of others to disagree and challenge our thinking. We must remain open to hearing various points of view and thinking expansively on different subjects. Dismissing topics because they make us uncomfortable or because we disagree with them is against the spirit of learning we are fostering in this classroom. It is important to keep in mind that all our experiences and perspectives are valid; however, it is also important that we do not center our own narratives to the exclusion of others.

### **This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Humanities area.**

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I interpret the human experience through creative, linguistic, and philosophical works?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze and interpret the meaning, cultural significance, and ethical implications of literary/philosophical texts or of works in the visual/performing arts.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Ethical Reasoning
- Information Literacy
- Intercultural Competence

### **Disability Services**

Georgia Tech welcomes students with disabilities into the Institute's educational programs. The Institute promotes efforts to provide equal access and a culture of inclusion without altering the essential elements of coursework.

Students experiencing academic barriers due to disability or chronic medical conditions should not hesitate to contact the Office of Disability Services at [disabilityservices.gatech.edu](http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu) or call the office at 404.894.2563 or in person at Smithgall Student Services Building, 353 Ferst Drive, Suite 221. If you have already registered with the Office of Disability Services and have obtained an accommodation letter, please meet with me privately during office hours as early in the semester as possible to discuss implementing your accommodations.

### **The Naugle Writing and Communication Center (NWCC)**

The Naugle Writing and Communication Center is located in 447 Clough. The NWCC tutors can help you with any stage of the writing process, including ideation. In addition to papers, they can assist with presentations and posters and also have presentation rehearsal rooms you can reserve. You can email them at [wcc@gatech.edu](mailto:wcc@gatech.edu) with questions about their services, drop by their front desk during regular business hours, or leave them a voicemail at 404-385-3612. Please utilize this free and very helpful service.

### **Academic Integrity**

This class strictly enforces the Georgia Tech Honor Code. *Do not submit work that is not your own. When direct quotations are used, they should be indicated, and when the ideas of another are incorporated into a paper, they must be appropriately acknowledged.*

This course is meant in part to improve and evaluate your writing ability. For this reason, for the purposes of this class, any student found to have used AI technologies or programs (e.g. Chat GPT) to compose part or all of any submitted work will face the same penalties as a student who submits plagiarized work (i.e. a failing grade in the course).

For more details, see [GT's Academic Honor Code](#).

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## **Required Texts**

*OJ: Made in America* (Amazon Prime)

Access to a dictionary and thesaurus

Access to Netflix

Access to videos on YouTube and the Georgia Tech Library Database

Other texts will be handouts and/or available online on our Canvas site:

[canvas.gatech.edu](https://canvas.gatech.edu)

## **Assignments**

### Participation - 20%

This course requires active and consistent attendance and participation from every member of class. This includes coming to class prepared (i.e., with your text and materials to take notes), contributing to in-class discussion and group work, and completing whatever assigned in-class writing assignment, such as completing pop quizzes, short writing assignments, and any online activities such as participating in discussion boards on Canvas.

More specifically, coming to class prepared also entails both reading all assigned materials (before class) and being prepared to engage critically with them in class, in addition to already completing or being prepared to complete any class assignment. This includes looking words up in the dictionary if you do not know the meaning of something you encounter while reading and heading to the library and/or the Internet for further explanation on a topic. You are expected to read, research, consider, and reconsider the assignments and their various contexts, both verbally and in the written form. *Taking notes while you read* is a crucial part of your homework and preparation for each class meeting.

Although I permit laptops and tablets for taking notes, *doing work for another class, online shopping, texting, email, TikTok, and other forms of social media and electronic communication are not allowed during class*. I may ask you to leave class for the day if I see you engaging in such activity, and I will certainly lower your overall participation grade if I see you engaging in such activity.

### Reflections and Media Reviews– 40%

You will complete two writing reflections for this course. These reflections invite you to respond to questions based on the reading. During the semester you'll also submit periodic media reviews that will give you a feel for different sorts of 90s media you will investigate further. Topics will be posted on Canvas. Check the course schedule for the due dates on these assignments.

### Midterm Essay – 15%

You will also complete a midterm essay that invites you outline your knowledge from the first half of the semester.

### Group Projects - 25%

This final project invites you to create a five-minute video essay that is a segment of a digital news magazine that delves into a significant aspect of the representation of Blackness in the 1990s. You will present on your work in progress at the end of the semester.

### **General Course Policies**

Please note that **email** is the best way to reach me outside of class and office hours. Allow up to about 24 hours for a response during the week and more on the weekends. If a response is going to warrant more than a few sentences, I will advise you to come to speak to me about the matter during office hours.

Come to class. **Attendance is crucial.** Your final participation grade will reflect your class attendance. You are permitted three unexcused absences per semester. Consider these absences your “PTO.” After three unexcused absences, I will deduct five points per absence from your participation grade. It is *your responsibility* to keep track of your absences.

If you are absent for one of the excused reasons listed in the [University catalog](#) please discuss your absence and, if appropriate, bring your written excuse to me on the first day you return to class. Some examples of excused absences include illness, medical emergencies, job interviews, religious observances, and approved Institute activities, such as professional conferences and athletic events. **You have one (1) week** (from the date of the absence) **to turn in any make-up work unless we have arranged otherwise.** Anything submitted after that point will not be accepted.

**Coming to class on time is also crucial.** I consider you tardy after five minutes; I consider you absent after ten minutes. Please note that three tardies are equal to one unexcused absence. Leaving early from class without permission will also result in a deduction of participation points.

Please note that **in-class writing assignments**, such as quizzes and certain writing reflections, **cannot be made up in the case of unexcused absence and/or tardiness**. **I do not accept late work without prior permission**. If you think you need an extension for an assignment, please be sure to ask me at least 24 hours in advance of the assignment's due date. If you do not submit your work by the deadline, you will receive zero credit.

### **About Grading**

For major assignments like midterms and finals I generally use the following grading scale:

90-100 = A

80-89 = B

70-79 = C

60-60 = D

59 and below = F

For smaller assignments like quizzes or discussion posts I use 5-point scale:

5 = Excellent

4 = Good

3 = Satisfactory

2 = Fair

1 = Poor

If I use a scale other than the ones listed above, I will make that clear before the assignment is due.

Remember, **your performance determines your final grade**. Keep in mind that hard work alone will not earn you an "A." However, not working hard will almost certainly not earn you an "A." Moreover, assignments and participation that simply meet minimum requirements or that are severely flawed will not earn grades higher than a "C." A "B" clearly exceeds all minimum requirements. **An "A" is a superbly executed assignment** that is clearly well above average.

**I do not discuss grades on the day you receive them, nor do I change grades during or at the end of the semester unless there has clearly been a mistake**. However, I do welcome discussion on what is strong and what or how to improve performance *during the course of the semester*. Do not wait until the end of the semester to consult me about your grade. "Grade-grubbing" at the end of the semester will not raise your grade in this course. Do not even consider it.

### **Course Schedule** (*subject to change*).

*During the course of the semester you may be tasked with reading short, explanatory pieces in or before class or with watching short videos prior to class that supplement your*

*reading. Such materials will be announced in class or on our Canvas site. \*Available on Canvas*

## **Introduction: Blackness, Media & the 1990s**

### **Week 1 — Friday, August 28**

First Day of Class — Introduction to Course & Syllabus

"A Race in Mind: The Press in Deed"\*

"As Hispanic Presence Grows, So Does Black Anger"\*

### **Week 2 — Friday, September 4**

Excerpt from Black Sexual Politics\*

"Introduction to Critical Media Studies"\*

## **Module I: Anita Hill–Clarence Thomas Hearings**

### **Week 3 — Friday, September 11**

Selected Newspaper Articles\*

Anita Hill's Opening Statement

Clarence Thomas's Opening Statement

WPIX News Coverage 1991

### **Week 4 — Friday, September 18**

Selected Newspaper Articles\*

"Hill, Thomas, and the Use of Racial Stereotype"\*

### **Week 5 — Friday, September 25**

Selected Newspaper Articles\*

"Black Ladies, Welfare Queens, and State Minstrels: Ideological War by Narrative Means"\*

**Media Review #1 Due**

## **Module II: Rodney King & the Los Angeles Uprising**

### **Week 6 — Friday, October 2**

Selected Newspaper Articles\*

"The Rodney King Beating"\*

"The Beating of Rodney King: The Dynamics of Backfire"\*

### **Week 7 — Friday, October 9**

Let It Fall (Netflix) — watch before class

Selected Newspaper Articles\*

"Rodney King 1992"\*

**Week 8 — Friday, October 16**

LA 92 (Netflix) — watch before class

"Street/Crime: From Rodney King's Beating to Michael Brown's Shooting"\*

**Reflection #1 Due**

**Module III: The O.J. Simpson Trial**

**Week 9 — Friday, October 23**

Selected Newspaper Articles\*

O.J.: Made in America, Episodes 1 & 2 — watch before class

**Midterm Due**

**Week 10 — Friday, October 30**

Selected Newspaper Articles\*

O.J.: Made in America, Episodes 3 & 4 — watch before class

"The Greatest Story Ever Sold: Marketing and the O.J. Simpson Trial"\*

**Week 11 — Friday, November 6**

O.J.: Made in America, Episode 5 — watch before class

"Serializing Racial Subjects: The Stagnation and Suspense of the O.J. Simpson Saga"\*

**Media Review #2 Due**

**Module IV: The Rise of Hip Hop**

**Week 12 — Friday, November 13**

Selected Articles & Albums\*

Hip Hop Evolution, Parts 1 & 2 (Netflix) — watch before class

**Week 13 — Friday, November 20**

Selected Articles & Albums\*

Hip Hop Evolution, Parts 3 & 4 (Netflix) — watch before class

**Reflection #2 Due**

***Week 14 — Friday, November 27 — No Class (Thanksgiving)***

**Week 15 — Friday, December 4 — Last Day of Class**

Final Presentations