

LMC 3405: Media, Culture & Society

Blackness, Media & Meaning-Making in the 1990s

Summer 2026

Tuesday/Thursday/Friday, 12:30–3:15 PM (Synchronous Online)

June 30 – July 30, 2025

Office Hours: By appointment

Email: susana@gatech.edu

Course Prerequisite: English 1102

Core Area/Attribute: C—Humanities

This synchronous online 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 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 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](#).

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

General Course Policies

Please note that **email** is the best way to reach me. 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 via Teams.

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.

Assignments

Participation - 60%

This course requires active and consistent participation from every member of class.

Active and consistent includes but is not limited to the following:

- Attend class with your camera on. Your camera must be on to receive full participation credit for each class
- Unmuting your mic and speaking in the larger group and in small group discussions
- Keeping up with the readings/viewings
- Completing quizzes, short writing assignments in class
- Participating in discussion boards
- Completing media reviews

Reflections – 20%

You will also complete a midterm essay exam in the middle of the term.

Final Project - 20%

This final invites you to create a five-minute video essay in response to one of the readings/viewings in the course. You can either create critical assessment of a work or do creative project (such as a pastiche). More information will be available on Canvas.

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.

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

Tuesday, June 30

First Day of Class — Introduction to Course & Syllabus

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

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

Thursday, July 2

"Introduction to Critical Media Studies"*

*Black Sexual Politics**

Friday, July 3 — No Class (Independence Day)

Module I: Anita Hill–Clarence Thomas Hearings

Tuesday, July 7

Selected Newspaper Articles*
Anita Hill's Opening Statement
Clarence Thomas's Opening Statement
WPIX News Coverage 1991

Thursday, July 9

Selected Newspaper Articles*
"Hill, Thomas, and the Use of Racial Stereotype"*

Friday, July 10

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

Monday, July 13

Media Review #1 Due

Module II: Rodney King & the Los Angeles Uprising

Tuesday, July 14

Selected Newspaper Articles*
"The Rodney King Beating"*
Let It Fall (Netflix) — watch before class

Thursday, July 16

Selected Newspaper Articles*

Friday, July 17

LA 92 (Netflix) — watch before class
Rodney King 1992"*

Monday, July 20

Reflection #1 Due

Module III: The O.J. Simpson Trial

Tuesday, July 21

Selected Newspaper Articles*

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

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

Thursday, July 23

Selected Newspaper Articles*

O.J.: Made in America, Episodes 3, 4 & 5 — watch before class

Friday, July 24

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

Media Review #2 Due

Module IV: The Rise of Hip Hop

Tuesday, July 28

Selected Articles & Albums*

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

Thursday, July 30 — Last Day of Class

Selected Articles & Albums*

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

Slow Burn, Season 3 — selected episodes

Final Presentations

Reflection #2 Due