



# WGST 290: Intersectional Black Protest Movements Spring 2021

Section 01 Class Number 47740

Dr. Kelly M. Nims

Mondays 11:10am-12:25pm

“The past is not dead. Actually, it’s not even past.” (William Faulkner)

This multidisciplinary course engages with histories of black protest in the U.S. in order to grapple with our close intimacy with a past that has not passed, specifically in relation to the tale of twenty-first century post-racial hope and the subsequent despair of the ongoing reality of Jim Crow that the promise of hope could not disavow under Trump: from the Black Jacobians of the Haitian Revolution to the racialized gender dynamics of nineteenth-century abolitionism; from the violence of John Brown and Nat Turner to the turn-the-other-cheek logic of the Civil Rights Movement; from the Black Panthers to Black Feminisms, all with an eye to global black anticolonial and antiracist movements. How do we contextualize our current moment and what is now the mainstream black protest movement—BLM—within this rich and contested history of resistance that we have not yet lived up to as a nation? Engaging with manifestos, speeches, critical essays, art and music, we’ll think about black protest movements across class, race, gender, sexuality, region and nation. For instance, what were points of affinity and rupture between the Panthers and Black and Latinx transwomen during riots like Stonewall, between the patriarchs of the Nation of Islam and Black Feminists, between the “by any means necessary” call of Malcolm X and Frantz Fanon and politics of reform and representation? Kimberle Crenshaw’s key term “intersectionality” has received much play these past years—what do we gain and what do we lose when we structure protest movements around identity and/or across identities? Does intersectionality risk becoming an expected, toothless gesture given corporate diversity and inclusion? With texts by Angela Davis, Ida B. Wells, Malcolm X, Marsha P. Johnson and Fela (to name a few) as touchstones, we’ll work to come to terms with over two hundred years of black resistance and the ways in which shifting the focus to incorporate multiple identities—or away from identity—illuminates demands for justice that would otherwise remain invisible.