

**Exhibition Seminar:
Black Women Artists in the Zimmerli Collection
Rutgers University**

16:082:698
Spring 2021
T 1:10p-4:10p

Prof. Wiley
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Synchronous Remote

The failure to recognize a critical black presence in the culture and in most scholarship and writing on postmodernism compels a black reader, particularly a black female reader, to interrogate her interest in a subject where those who discuss and write about it seem not to know black women exist or to even consider the possibility that we might be somewhere writing or saying something that should be listened to, or producing art that should be seen, heard, approached with intellectual seriousness...



“Yearning” is the word that best describes a common psychological state shared by many of us, cutting across boundaries of race, class, gender, and sexual practice. Specifically in relation to the postmodernist deconstruction of “master” narratives, the yearning that wells in the hearts and minds of those whom such narratives have silenced is the longing for critical voice.

bell hooks, “Postmodern Blackness,” 1990

This upper-level graduate seminar is a collaboration between the Art History Department, the Center for Women in the Arts and Humanities, and the Zimmerli Art Museum. In this course students will investigate research problems and cover relevant aspects of exhibition conceptualization and development. Using the collection of the Zimmerli Art Museum as a resource, this seminar builds on the range of Black women artists represented in the permanent collection. Students will investigate artworks in the collection and respond to the question of a “postmodern Blackness,” as posited by leading scholars and theorists, and its relationship to these women artists. Why postmodern Blackness? The bulk of artwork by Black women represented in the Zimmerli’s collection was produced in the last two decades of the twentieth century.

The class format incorporates lectures, discussions, workshops, guest speakers, and (depending on travel and meeting restrictions due to COVID) potential for site visits. The seminar will explore many elements of museum exhibition planning, problem solving, interpretation, and design. Students will work on exhibition checklist, interpretive strategies such as museum labels, catalogue entries, and wall text. The work is collaborative, and will build towards a physical exhibition (with virtual elements) in Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series (DWAS) in the spring of 2022. The DWAS is the oldest continuous running exhibition space in the United States dedicated to making visible the work of emerging and established contemporary women artists.