Catalog Description:
Prerequisite: acceptance to the University Honors Program, or consent of instructor. In a *New York Times* conversation following Beyoncé’s explosive 2016 Superbowl performance, critic Wesley Morris suggested that Beyoncé “lands somewhere between” Madonna and Nina Simone. This course brings these three artists from different generations together, situating their work historically, within contemporary critical discussions around race/gender/sexuality and cultural appropriation, and in dialogue with one another. The course offers a cultural studies-based examination of the work of the three artists; our method is not primarily sociological or biographical, though relevant biographical and sociological evidence may inform our analysis. We listen to the music of the three artists, watch their music videos, and read scholarship in critical race studies and feminist cultural criticism. Students develop collaborative oral presentations on each of the three artists and a final critical or creative mashup or disentangling of Beyoncé/Madonna/Nina Simone. Discussion-based seminar. (Offered as needed.) 3 credits.

Course Learning Outcomes:
Students will
• understand the historical, political, and cultural contexts that inform the work of Beyoncé, Madonna, and Nina Simone, in keeping with Honors Program Learning Outcome a’s call for developing a starting point for intellectual exploration (see below)
• intervene in scholarship in critical race studies and feminist cultural studies, orally, in writing, and using New Media, in keeping with Honors Program Learning Outcome d’s emphasis on the development of effective communication skills (see below)
• develop nuanced critical and creative interdisciplinary analyses of a variety of cultural artifacts through the application of terminology, perspectives, and texts from the fields of critical race studies and feminist cultural studies, in keeping with Honors Program Learning Outcome b’s on focus on analysis and synthesis and Honors Program Learning Outcome c’s attention to the application of interdisciplinary understandings (see below)

Honors Program Learning Outcomes:
Upon completing a course in the University Honors Program students will have:
a. Obtained a starting point for integrative exploration of the development of cultures and intellectual achievements through a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives;
b. Sharpened their ability to critically analyze and synthesize a broad range of knowledge through the study of primary texts and through engagement in active learning with fellow students, faculty, and texts (broadly understood);
c. Understood how to apply more integrative and interdisciplinary forms of understanding in the advancement of knowledge and in addressing complex challenges shaping the world;
d. Developed effective communication skills, specifically in the areas of written and oral exposition and analysis.

GE Learning Outcomes:
- Artistic Inquiry: Students compose critical or creative works that embody or analyze conceptually an artistic form at a baccalaureate/pre-professional level.
- Social Inquiry: Provides students an opportunity to explore processes by which human beings develop social and/or historical perspectives.

Content:
In a *New York Times* conversation following Beyoncé’s explosive 2016 Superbowl performance, critic Wesley Morris suggested that Beyoncé “lands somewhere between” Madonna and Nina Simone. This course brings these three singers from different generations together, situating their work historically, within contemporary critical discussions around race/gender/sexuality, and in dialogue with one another.

In the 1960s, Nina Simone became a powerful ally of the Civil Rights movement and a pariah to the US political and cultural establishment. During the US culture wars of the 1990s, bell hooks attacked Madonna as racist and sexist, while Camille Paglia exalted Madonna as the high priestess of feminism. Both Madonna and Beyoncé have been accused of cultural appropriation, and hooks recently referred to Beyoncé as a “terrorist” in reaction to Beyoncé embracing the word “feminist.” Others have praised Beyoncé for referencing the Black Panthers, #BlackLivesMatter, and Hurricane Katrina in her latest work.

We’ll engage with the work of the above (and other) critics and the three artists as we consider the following and other questions:
- What different methodologies might we employ to analyze the three artists’ work?
- How might we read their work as commenting on and imbricated in contemporary and historical political and social discourse?
- What kinds of connections and disconnections across cultures, generations, and historical contexts might we find among these three artists and their work as they traverse and intervene into a variety of political and social discourses around race, gender, and sexuality?
- What is the significance of these connections and disconnections?
• What roles do art, culture, and celebrities play in shaping and reflecting culture and society?

Students will read scholarly work in the areas of critical race studies and feminist cultural criticism; and listen to, watch, and analyze music and music videos by Beyoncé, Madonna, and Nina Simone, as well as other media representations of the three artists and their work.

This is a discussion-based class, and students are expected to participate actively in all seminar discussions. Other course requirements include careful critical reading/viewing of all assigned texts, preparing and presenting three collaborative oral presentations, and developing a critical or creative final project.

Course Texts:
Books:
• Frank and Smith, eds. Madonnarama: Essays on Sex and Popular Culture
• hooks, bell. Black Looks: Race and Representation
• Madonna. Sex.
• Metz and Benson, eds. The Madonna Companion: Two Decades of Commentary
• Paglia, Camille. Excerpts from Vamps and Tramps and Sex, Art, and American Culture
• Redmon, Shana. Anthem: Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora
• Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation
• Walker, Alice. Meridian.

Articles:
• Caramanica, Jon, Wesley Morris, and Jenna Wortham. “Beyoncé in ‘Formation’: Entertainer, Activist, Both?”
• Pierpont, Claudia Roth. “A Raised Voice: How Nina Simone Turned the Movement into Music.”

Films:
• DuVernay, Ava, dir. Selma.
• Garbus, Liz, dir. What Happened, Miss Simone?
• Kesheshian, Alek, dir. Madonna: Truth or Dare
• Lee, Spike, dir. When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts
• Parmar, Prathiba, dir. A Place of Rage

Music Videos:
• Beyoncé. “Formation”
• Coldplay and Beyoncé. “Hymn for the Weekend”
• Madonna. The Immaculate Collection
• Madonna. “Justify My Love.”
• Madonna. “What It Feels Like for a Girl.”

Music:
• Beyoncé.
• Madonna.
Simone, Nina.

Instructional strategies:
1. Seminar-style discussion will be a central component of the course. These discussions will focus on two types of texts:
   a. Secondary sources (scholarship in critical race studies and feminist cultural criticism, including work on Beyoncé, Madonna, and Nina Simone)—students are expected to read all texts carefully and critically and to engage in vigorous class discussions about the texts and the issues they raise.
   b. Close reading of primary sources (in-class analysis of selected songs and performances by Nina Simone, Madonna music videos, and videos of live performances by Beyoncé)—this work will hone students’ skills in close reading and textual analysis.
2. Revision. Students will get feedback on a draft of their final project in a conference with the instructor, and are expected to revise the draft based on this feedback before submitting the final project.
3. Collaborative student presentations (see below)

Methods of Evaluation:
1. Collaborative Presentation on Nina Simone: at the end of Unit 1 (Nina Simone), pairs of students will each offer an analysis of one Nina Simone song of their choice, focusing on the historical references in the chosen song. This assignment is designed to encourage students to focus on the historical contexts of the material they are working with. The instructor will assign each presentation pair a letter grade after the presentations, accompanied by a prose evaluation of the pair’s performance.
2. Collaborative Presentation on Madonna: at the end of Unit 2 (Madonna), pairs of students will each offer an analysis of one Madonna music video of their choice. This assignment is designed to allow students to apply class work on Madonna to their own independent analysis, also demonstrating their ability to account for the multiple elements that make up a music video. The instructor will assign each presentation pair a letter grade after the presentations, accompanied by a prose evaluation of the pair’s performance.
3. Collaborative Presentation on Beyoncé: at the end of Unit 3 (Beyoncé), pairs of students will select a “Beyoncé cultural moment” for analysis. This assignment is designed to encourage students to apply scholarly texts on race and gender in the service of a sophisticated cultural analysis. The instructor will assign each presentation pair a letter grade after the presentations, accompanied by a prose evaluation of the pair’s performance.
4. Final Project: at the end of Unit 4 (Beyoncé, Madonna, and Nina Simone), students will individually or in collaboration with other students develop a critical or creative final project that offers a “mash up” of the three artists, or makes the case for bringing the three together, or, alternately, argues that one or more of the three artists does not belong in this makeshift group. This assignment is designed to encourage students to synthesize the course’s three previous units. It also
encourages students to work with new media and to bridge the scholarly work they have been doing with their own creativity. Students will receive feedback on drafts of their final projects from the instructor in individual conferences. The instructor will assign a letter grade for and provide a prose evaluation of each revised final project. Students will be encouraged to present final projects at the Student Research and Creative Activities Fair.

**Chapman University Academic Integrity Policy:**
Chapman University is a community of scholars which emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith. Students are responsible for doing their own work, and academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated anywhere in the university.

**Students with Disabilities Policy:**
In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. The University, through the Center for Academic Success, will work with the appropriate faculty member who is asked to provide the accommodations for a student in determining what accommodations are suitable based on the documentation and the individual student needs. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

**Equity and Diversity:**
Chapman University is committed to ensuring equality and valuing diversity. Students and professors are reminded to show respect at all times as outlined in Chapman’s Harassment and Discrimination Policy: [http://tinyurl.com/CUHarassment-Discrimination](http://tinyurl.com/CUHarassment-Discrimination). Any violations of this policy should be discussed with the professor, the Dean of Students and/or otherwise reported in accordance with this policy.

**Prepared by: Ian Barnard**

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