

*BWS 151 Final essay assignment*

This assignment will provide students with an opportunity to reflect on, revise, and articulate their conceptualization of self-definition after participating in BWS 151: Introduction to Black World Studies. Throughout the semester, you have been encouraged to ask yourself the following questions:

How has the Black body been schooled?

How might examining the present-day Black body in conversation with records of Black existentialism assist in making meaning of the world(s) we are in?

How do I understand myself in relation to the content I am learning?

How do I exist, in the body that I hold, in this historical moment?

Prompt and question: 5-7 pages

We have studied the positions, insights, and reflections of people who spoke eloquently about the condition of minoritized bodies across the Black diaspora. From W.E.B Du Bois and Ida B. Wells to James Baldwin and Audre Lorde, they were privy to a way of living that necessitated a process of determination. Their expressions are an indication of their life's work in pursuit of *self-definition*. Self-definition is anchored in cultural memory, the insurgent demand of Black feminist thoughts' call to agency and self-determination, and the Black radical imagination. More pointedly, self-definition is both affirming of the possible self and tragically realistic about the functions of power in relation to others and institutions. In the process of self-definition you have seen how individuals can define themselves within an oppressively resistant culture that does not value their humanity. The people we studied cogently understood that in order to achieve a basic dignity and personhood, their ways of existing could not mirror the privileged and uncontested dominant logic that prevails in the world we occupy. As such, please respond to the following questions:

- 1.) What new possibilities of being are you conceptualizing given your exposure to this curriculum? In other words, now that you spent a semester studying the ways Black people have been controlled by various societal structures, and simultaneously, the ways they have sought to experience life on their own terms, what will this mean for how you live your life moving forward? (Approximately 2 pages) *Cite at minimum 4 readings.*
- 2.) How will you exist, in the body that you hold, in this historical moment? Addressing the 5 tenets of self-definition (Validating standpoint knowledge; Prioritizing self-love; Emphasizing agency; Identity as Performative; Dreaming and Imagining Futures) discuss your understanding of each concept and how you will, if possible, employ them in your life. (Approximately 3-4 pages) *Cite at minimum 4 readings.*