In this short analytical response paper, discuss how filmmakers Oscar Micheaux and Cheryl Dunye challenge specific anti-Black stereotypes in their films Within Our Gates (1920) and Watermelon Woman (1996), and expose the challenges faced by different Black communities in modern America. Racist ideologies as expressed by someone like D.W.

Griffith posit that race is a matter of biological difference. However, today we recognize that race, gender, and sexuality are not a matter of innate biological, intellectual or moral difference, but rather a social experience of inequity, dehumanization, and erasure due to patriarchy, compulsory heterosexuality, racism, and racial capitalism. How do these two filmmakers illustrate this in their films – namely, race and sexuality as social experiences and not biological essences?

Discuss multiple aspects of both films to develop your explanation of how they explore these social experiences. You may discuss at least two from the following – use of genre (race melodrama or documentary), plot, character (with shot selection, costuming, dialog, lighting), the building of action.

Make sure you introduce every film and filmmaker with a very brief plot description. For this paper, you are expected to draw upon lectures, class discussions and assigned readings (Jane Gaines and Clitha Mason), to synthesize your understanding of the filmmakers’ goals, themes depicted and strategies utilized in each film.

Make sure to attribute direct quotations to the authors (Gaines or Mason) and see more on the appropriate use of quotations in the rubric below.