Beyoncé Knowles is known as many things: singer, songwriter, actress, performer, half of hip-hop and R&B’s most powerful couple, wife, mother. But, few take her seriously as a political figure (although this is changing recently due to Beyoncé’s own insistence). This course attempts to think about our contemporary U.S. society and its current class, racial, gender, and sexual politics through the music and career of Beyoncé. On the surface, she might deploy messages about race, gender, class, and sexuality that appear to coincide with certain stereotypical social norms; but during this course we will ask: how does she also challenge our very understanding of these categories? How does Beyoncé push the boundaries of these categories to make space for and embrace other perhaps more “deviant” bodies, desires, and/or politics? We will attempt to position Beyoncé as a progressive, feminist, and even queer figure through close examination of her music alongside readings on the history of black feminist struggle in the U.S. (all by black women/feminists themselves), both historical and contemporary. We will not read about Beyoncé; rather, these juxtapositions will put Beyoncé’s work in conversation with the field of black feminism in an attempt to answer: can Beyoncé’s music be seen as a blueprint for progressive social change? In addition to close analyses of her songs and music videos, we will also look at related artists who, like Beyoncé, politicize the black female experience in the U.S. through their music and challenge society’s normative conceptions of what it means to be a black woman.