Overview: This book is a series of essays addressing the issue of race and sexuality in the United States. While McBride addresses the state of sexuality in general in the United States, his main focus is on homosexuality in the Black community. Separated into three sections, the first titled “Queer Black Thought,” the second, “Race and Sexuality on Occasion,” and the third, “Straight Black Talk,” all focus on different aspects of sexuality in a racially charged country like the United States. In the preface of the book, Manuel Antonio says, “This book is primarily and explicitly about pushing the boundaries of what we call the discipline (and I do call it a discipline and not a field) of African American or black studies” (2).

“Queer Black Thought” begins the book by revealing the “truths,” as McBride calls them, or realities, of race and sexuality in the United States. This section contains arguably the most intriguing and eye-opening essay in the book, “Why I Hate Abercrombie & Fitch.” This essay, while pointing out specific flaws in an evidently racist organization, sheds light on the bigger picture of how Blacks in the United States are seemingly excluded from so-called elite workplaces simply by a company’s stipulations for working there.

Part II of the book, “Race and Sexuality on Occasion,” places race and sexuality in a more critical lens. The essays in this section range in topic from affirmative action to the 1992 uprisings in Los Angeles. However, the majority of his essays addressed the racial issues surrounding the Black community. The most interesting chapter of this section focuses on Ellen Degeneres’ coming out, which
was aired on national television. McBride says, “What Ellen demonstrated is that it is
easier for all of us, heterosexuals and gays/lesbians alike, to identify with a
character in, and the drama of, a situation comedy than to address the political
realities of gay/lesbian life” (153). This essay is one of few in which McBride praises
the work of a woman, not to mention a white woman, in the gay and lesbian
community.

“Straight Black Talk” ended the book on an academic note. In this final
section, McBride places the subjects of race and sexuality in the lens of
intellectualism and theory. Quoting notable activists and pioneers of equality like
Cornel West, McBride “lays out the academic genealogy of [his] thinking about race
and sexuality” (3). He goes on to note that academia and what students are taught
about race and sexuality informs the rest of their lives.

Overall, Why I Hate Abercrombie & Fitch is an extremely relevant and
poignant look at the state of race and sexuality in the United States. Despite the fact
that the essays featured are written over a span of ten years, they (unfortunately) all
are still applicable to American society presently. Most notable about Why I Hate
Abercrombie & Fitch, aside from its interesting subject matter, is McBride’s passion
and devotion to creating awareness of the inequality that Blacks, especially those
who identify as homosexuals, continue to face in American society. While McBride
maintains a critical and, at times, harsh tone throughout his essays, one also walks
away from reading this book feeling inspired to encourage awareness and more
importantly, to create change.
How this work can be applied to American Studies: This book is an American Studies student’s dream. It is interdisciplinary at its core, combining themes of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Gender and queer studies are also at the heart of McBride’s writing, making this book completely applicable to Gender and Women’s Studies departments.