

AFH 5934/WOH 5932: RETHINKING THE BLACK ATLANTIC

Spring 2021

Instructor:
Philip Janzen
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Course Schedule:
Monday periods 9-11 (online)
Office hours (online):
Wed 2:00-3:30 or by appt.

Course Overview

It has been nearly three decades since the publication of Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. In the intervening years, many scholars have taken up Gilroy's ideas and contributed to the surge of scholarship on postcolonial theory, transnationalism, and the African diaspora. Others, however, have made important critiques of Gilroy's framework and called for alternative conceptualizations. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to some of these debates, and more broadly, to recent trends in the study of the African diaspora and the Atlantic world. We will examine a broad range of topics and themes: slavery, revolution, religions, gender constructions, diasporic identities, and political expressions. Most course readings will draw from history, but we will also consider disciplines and genres such as literature, anthropology, geography, and autobiography.

Learning Objectives

Over the course of the semester, we will pay particular attention to how a broad understanding of historiography informs strong research questions. As such, the readings include both classic and more recently published texts. Each week, I have paired the primary readings with secondary readings published earlier or later. When considered together, the primary and secondary readings should promote discussion about the historiographical arc of a particular theme or topic. These discussions will prepare you for the final assignment: a historiographical essay.

Required Texts

All required texts are available online through the UF library. Students may also choose to purchase hard copies through the UF bookstore or from another bookseller. I will post all other readings on Canvas.

Monique Bedasse, *Jah Kingdom: Rastafarians, Tanzania, and Pan-Africanism in the Age of Decolonization* (UNC, 2017)

Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Harvard, 2008)

Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Harvard, 2003)

Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, 2014)

C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (Duke, 2013 [1963])

Lisa A. Lindsay, *Atlantic Bonds: A Nineteenth-Century Odyssey from America to Africa* (UNC, 2017)

Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Duke, 2015)

Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minnesota, 2006)

David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Duke, 2004)

Jon Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Harvard, 2005)

Sasha Turner, *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica* (Penn, 2017)

Evaluation

A) Class Participation (30%): This course consists of weekly discussions via Zoom. You should come to each session having completed the assigned readings and prepared to participate actively. Please be respectful and empathetic toward one another. We all learn and process ideas in our own ways.

B) Discussion Leadership/Short Paper (20%): Each week, one of you will lead discussion and write a brief paper (2-3 pages, double-spaced) analyzing the relationship between the readings. You must post the paper on Canvas for the rest of us to read at least 24 hours before class. Depending on enrollments, you may be required to lead discussion more than once, but you will only be required to complete one paper.

C) Bibliography/Meeting (10%): In Week 9, you will submit a secondary source bibliography for your final paper and meet with me in person to discuss your approach. NB: US citizens and permanent residents may opt to meet with me online.

D) Historiographical Review Essay (40%): Your essay should examine the development of the major scholarly arguments on a topic related to this course. You must present a range of scholarly positions, analyze the politics that informed the emergence and decline of these positions, and suggest possibilities for future research. The final essays should be 15 pages in length and are due on the last day of class (April 19).

For an example of a historiographical review essay, see Tiffany R. Patterson and Robin D. G. Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World," *African Studies Review* 43, no. 1 (2000): 11-45.

Course Schedule

Week 1 Introduction

1/11 Review syllabus and course expectations.

Week 2 Defining and Conceptualizing

1/18 No Class. Read and reflect on different conceptualizations of the African diaspora and Black Atlantic.

Primary Reading: Paul Gilroy, "The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity," in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Harvard, 1993): 1-40.

Secondary Reading: Colin Palmer, "Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora," *Perspectives: American Historical Association Newsletter* 36, no. 6 (1998): 1, 22-25; Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Rewriting the African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic," *African Affairs* 104 (2005): 35-68.

Questions: How does Gilroy define "The Black Atlantic?" Is it synonymous with "The African diaspora"? How have other scholars conceptualized the African diaspora? How have other scholars critiqued Gilroy's framework?

UNIT I: SLAVERY AND REVOLUTION

Week 3 Death and Ritual

1/25 Primary Reading: Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Harvard, 2008).

Secondary Reading: Joseph C. Miller, "Conclusion: The Economics of Mortality," in *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830* (Wisconsin, 1988): 657-692.

Questions: How did death define slave societies in the Caribbean and Brazil? In Africa? How did enslaved Africans respond to death? Social death? How did rituals evolve in the Americas?

Week 4 Women and Children

2/1 Primary Reading: Sasha Turner, *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica* (Penn, 2017).

Secondary Reading: Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1-14.

Questions: How did the end of the slave trade affect the daily lives of women and children in Jamaica? How have archives and historians shaped representations of enslaved women? How does Turner define children and childhood?

Week 5 Revolt and Revolution

2/8 Primary Reading: Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, 2014).

Secondary Reading: John K. Thornton, "I am a Subject of the King of Congo': African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution," *Journal of World History* 4, no. 2 (1993): 181-214.

Questions: Was the Haitian Revolution an African revolution? How have historians tried to incorporate African perspectives? What are the methodological possibilities/limits of such approaches? What were the impacts of the Haitian Revolution in Cuba, and beyond?

UNIT II: BLACK ATLANTIC BIOGRAPHIES

Week 6 Religion and Creolization

2/15 Primary Reading: Jon Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Harvard, 2005).

Secondary Reading: James H. Sweet, "Re-Imagining the African-Atlantic Archive: Method, Concept, Epistemology, Ontology," *Journal of African History* 55, no. 2 (2014): 147-159.

Questions: Where and when does “creolization” begin? What are the links between religion and creolization? What role did creolized peoples have in the making of an “Atlantic world”?

Week 7 Reversing Sail

2/22 Primary Reading: Lisa A. Lindsay, *Atlantic Bonds: A Nineteenth-Century Odyssey from America to Africa* (UNC, 2017).

Secondary Reading: J. Lorand Matory, “The English Professors of Brazil: On the Diasporic Roots of the Yorùbá Nation,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41, no. 1 (1999): 72-103.

Questions: What were the nature of Atlantic connections between Nigeria, Brazil, and the United States? How do Lindsay and Matory reorient Gilroy’s conception of diaspora? Creolization or dialogue?

Week 8 Imperial Itineraries

3/1 Primary Reading: C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (Duke, 2013 [1963])

You may also choose to read Stuart Hall, *Familiar Stranger: A Life between Two Islands* (Duke, 2019); Hazel Carby, *Imperial Intimacies: A Tale of Two Islands* (Verso, 2019); Maya Angelou, *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* (Virago, 1986); Dionne Brand, *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging* (Doubleday, 2001).

Secondary Reading: Lara Putnam, “To Study the Fragments/Whole: Microhistory and the Atlantic World,” *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 3 (2006): 615-630.

Questions: How do (auto)biographies shape scholarly approaches to the history of the Black Atlantic? Are there limitations to relying on the perspectives and experiences of individuals?

Week 9 No Class

3/8 Individual meetings; secondary source bibliography due.

UNIT III: DIASPORA AND DECOLONIZATION

Week 10 **Temporalities of Anticolonialism**

3/15 Primary Reading: David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Duke, 2004)

Secondary Reading: Gary Wilder, "Untimely Vision: Aimé Césaire, Decolonization, Utopia" *Public Culture* 21, no. 1 (2009): 101-140.

Questions: Do you agree with Scott's reading of *The Black Jacobins*? Why or Why not? What role do time and imagination play in the intellectual history of the Atlantic world?

Week 11 **Translation and Circulation**

3/22 Primary Reading: Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Harvard, 2003)

Secondary Reading: TBA

Questions: How have translation and migration unified (and divided) Africans and African-descended peoples around the Atlantic world? How do Edwards' geographic and linguistic scopes shape his argument? What other languages/migrations have animated the history of Black Internationalism?

Week 12 **Decolonization between the Caribbean and Africa**

3/29 Primary Reading: Monique Bedasse, *Jah Kingdom: Rastafarians, Tanzania, and Pan-Africanism in the Age of Decolonization* (UNC, 2017).

Secondary Reading: Frederick Cooper, "What is the Concept of Globalization Good for? An African Historian's Perspective," *African Affairs* 100 (2001): 189-213.

Questions: What are the links between slavery, colonialism, and decolonization? How do "Atlantic" histories impose coherence across time and space?

UNIT IV: RE-DEFINING, RE-CONCEPTUALIZING?

Week 13 **Alternative Geographies**

4/5 Primary Reading: Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minnesota, 2006).

Secondary Readings: Kamau Brathwaite, "Caliban's Garden," *Wasafiri* 16 (Autumn 1992): 2-6; Kamau Brathwaite, "Caribbean Man in Space and Time," *Savacou* 11/12 (September 1975): 1-11, 106-108.

Questions: What are "demonic grounds"? Can historians work and think archipelagically? Tidalectically? How do McKittrick, Wynter, and Brathwaite conceptualize diaspora?

Week 14 **Alternative Frameworks**

4/12 Primary Reading: Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Duke, 2015).

Questions: How does Lowe weave together geography, time, and "humanism"? Should historians think beyond the frameworks of nation/continent/ocean?

Week 15 **Course Wrap-Up**

4/19 Papers due online

OTHER NOTES

Learning in a Pandemic

For both students and faculty, this semester will bring more stress and anxiety than usual. I have worked hard to create an engaging syllabus, but there will be hiccups and I will almost certainly make mistakes. If you have questions about the course or assignments, do not hesitate to contact me via Canvas or by email. You may also come to my online office hours or make a separate appointment with me.

Office Hours

To schedule an appointment with me:

1. Click on "Calendar" in Canvas.
2. Click "Find Appointment" (on the right)
3. Select this course from the dropdown menu (AFH 5934 or WOH 5932).
5. Click on a date in the calendar in the top right.
6. Select and reserve one of the appointments for that date.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Health and Wellness Resources

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit <https://umatter.ufl.edu/> to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit <https://counseling.ufl.edu/> or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Grading Scale

A	93-100	B-	80-82	D+	67-69
A-	90-92	C+	77-79	D	63-66
B+	87-89	C	73-76	D-	60-62
B	83-86	C-	70-72	E	Below 60

For information regarding current UF policies for assigning grade points, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>