

## AFH 5934/WOH 5932: RETHINKING THE BLACK ATLANTIC

Fall 2023

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Course Schedule: M periods 8-10

0013 Keene-Flint Hall

Office hours: W 2-4 or by appt.

### Course Overview

It has been 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 to purchase through the UF bookstore or from another bookseller. Apart from Brand, *A Map to the Door of No Return*, all required texts are also available online through the UF library. Apart from Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery* and Sharpe, *Immaterial Archives*, all other books are available on reserve at Library West. I will post other readings on Canvas.

Dionne Brand, *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging* (Vintage Canada, 2001)

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)

Marjoleine Kars, *Blood on the River: A Chronicle of Mutiny and Freedom on the Wild Coast* (New Press, 2020)

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

Jennifer Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic* (Duke, 2021)

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)

Jenny Sharpe, *Immaterial Archives: An African Diaspora Poetics of Loss* (Northwestern, 2020)

### **Evaluation**

A) Class Participation (30%): This course consists of weekly discussions. 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 8, you will submit a secondary source bibliography for your final paper and meet with me to discuss your approach.

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 15-20 pages long and are due online on December 4.

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 2 Introduction

8/28 Review syllabus and course expectations.

### Week 3 Defining and Conceptualizing

9/4 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 Readings: Colin Palmer, "Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora," *Perspectives: American Historical Association Newsletter* 36:6 (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 4 Death and Ritual

9/11 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 5      Women and Children**

9/18      Primary Reading: Jennifer Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic* (Duke, 2021).

Secondary Reading: Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12:2 (2008): 1-14.

Questions: How have archives and historians shaped representations of enslaved women? What are the differences between the methods used by Morgan and Hartman? What is childhood in the context of slavery?

**Week 6      Revolt**

9/25      Primary Reading: Marjoleine Kars, *Blood on the River: A Chronicle of Mutiny and Freedom on the Wild Coast* (New Press, 2020).

Secondary Reading: Monica Schuler, "Ethnic Slave Rebellions in the Caribbean and the Guianas," *Journal of Social History* 3:4 (1970): 374-385.

Questions: What factors led to slave revolts in the Caribbean? What is the difference between a revolt, a rebellion, and a revolution? What is freedom and how does it differ from emancipation?

**Week 7      Revolution**

10/2      Primary Reading: Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, 2014).

Secondary Reading: Kathryn M. de Luna, "Sounding the African Atlantic," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (2021): 581-616.

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

**Week 8      No Class**

10/9      Individual meetings; secondary source bibliography due.

## UNIT II: BLACK ATLANTIC BIOGRAPHIES

### Week 9 Religion and Creolization

10/16 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 10 Reversing Sail

10/23 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? How do biographies shape scholarly approaches to the history of the Black Atlantic?

## UNIT III: DIASPORA AND DECOLONIZATION

### Week 11 Temporalities of Anticolonialism

10/30 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*? How have time and imagination shaped Black Atlantic intellectual history?

**Week 12 Translation and Circulation**

11/6 Primary Reading: Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Harvard, 2003).

Secondary Reading: TBD

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 Black Atlantic history?

**Week 13 Archives and Narratives of Diaspora**

11/13 Primary Reading: Jenny Sharpe, *Immaterial Archives: An African Diaspora Poetics of Loss* (Northwestern, 2020).

Secondary Reading: Kamau Brathwaite, "Caribbean Man in Space and Time," *Small Axe* 25:3 (2021): 90-104; Kelly Baker Josephs, "Caribbean Studies in Digital Space and Time," *Small Axe* 25:3 (2021): 105-115.

Questions: How do scholars and "Atlantic" histories impose coherence across time and space? Can historians work and think archipelagically? How do Sharpe, Brathwaite, and Josephs conceptualize diaspora?

**Week 14 Independent Research & Writing**

11/20 No class. Work on final paper.

**Week 15 Meditation**

11/27 Primary Reading: Dionne Brand, *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging* (Vintage Canada, 2001).

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

**Week 16 Course Wrap-Up**

12/4 Final Papers due

## OTHER NOTES

### Attendance

Frequent unexcused absences will result in a low participation grade. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found [here](#).

### Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the [Disability Resource Center](#) 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.

### Health and Wellness Resources

*U Matter, We Care:* If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit [www.umatter.ufl.edu/](http://www.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 [www.counseling.ufl.edu/](http://www.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

Click [here](#) for more info on UF policies for assigning grade points.

### Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is [available here](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or at [this link](#). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students [here](#).