

## AFH 3931: AFRICANS IN THE AMERICAS, 1500-1800

Spring 2025

Instructor: Dr. Philip Janzen  
Office: 494 Grinter Hall  
Office Hours: M 2:00-4:00  
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Course Schedule:  
T period 7, R periods 7/8  
0111 Keene-Flint Hall

### Course Overview

Between 1492 and 1808, Africans represented the largest stream of arrivals in the Americas, outnumbering Europeans by a ratio of more than 3:1. This course surveys the history of the African presence in the Americas until 1808, when the English outlawed the transatlantic slave trade. Rather than emphasizing the economy and demography of the slave trade, however, this course explores the many ideas, institutions, and cultures that not only arrived with Africans in the Americas but shaped the Atlantic world.

### Learning Objectives

This course will allow students to develop one of the central skills of historical thinking—the ability to imagine the world from the perspective of someone in circumstances different than one’s own. Through lectures, readings, and assignments, students will learn to read and write critically about the history of the African presence in the Americas. Students will leave the course with a grounding in *how* to think about the African diaspora as well as an understanding of *why* this is important.

### Required Course Text

Dionne Brand, *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging* (Picador, 2024)

The Brand book is available for purchase at the UF Bookstore and through online booksellers. It is also on reserve at Library West. Links to all other readings can be found on Canvas.

### Evaluation

- |                                    |       |      |
|------------------------------------|-------|------|
| • Assignment #1: Article Précis    | (15%) | 2/14 |
| • Assignment #2: Midterm Essay     | (20%) | 3/14 |
| • Assignment #3: Historical Marker | (15%) | 4/7  |
| • Assignment #4: Final Essay       | (25%) | 4/30 |
| • Participation                    | (25%) | ---  |

## Procedure

In general, the Tuesday class will be a lecture and the Thursday class will be a mix of lecture and discussion based on the assigned weekly readings and in-class activities. I expect you to attend the lectures, complete the weekly readings, and participate actively in discussions. Your participation grade is based on quality contributions to class discussions.

## Course Schedule

### Week 1 Introduction to the Course

1/14-1/16 **Lectures:** Review Syllabus; Defining the African Diaspora

**Reading:** Colin A. Palmer, "Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora" *Perspectives on History* (1998).

### Week 2 Slavery and Economy in Africa

1/21-1/23 **Lectures:** African slavery and economies before European arrivals; Regions and ports

**Reading:** John K. Thornton, "Slavery and African Social Structure," in *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (1998): 72-97.

### Week 3 The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas: Why Africans?

1/28-1/30 **Lectures:** European background to the Atlantic slave trade; Fifteenth-century European slavery

**Reading:** James H. Sweet, "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought," *William and Mary Quarterly* (1997): 1-24.

### Week 4 Enslavement and the Middle Passage

2/4-2/6 **Lectures:** Overview of the Transatlantic Slave Trade; Social death

**Reading:** Stephanie Smallwood, "Turning African Captives into Atlantic Commodities," in *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (2007): 33-64; Vincent Brown, "Social Death and

Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *American Historical Review* 114 (2009): 1231-1249; Excerpts from Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description*

## **Week 5 Primary Sources and the Transatlantic Slave Trade**

2/11-2/13 **Lectures:** Primary sources and the Transatlantic Slave Trade; Olaudah Equiano and Florence Hall

**Reading:** Olaudah Equiano, "Chapter 2," in *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*; Vincent Carretta, "Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa? New Light on an Eighteenth-Century Question of Identity," *Slavery and Abolition*, 20, 3 (1999): 96-105; Paul Lovejoy, "Autobiography and Memory: Gustavus Vassa, alias Olaudah Equiano, the African," *Slavery and Abolition* 27 (2006): 317-347

ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE ON 2/14

## **Week 6 Africans in the Markets of the Atlantic**

2/18-2/20 **Lectures:** Worlds of work; Case studies in Jamaica, South Carolina, Brazil

**Reading:** Stuart Schwartz, "Sugar Plantation Labor and Slave Life," in *Slaves, Rebels, and Peasants* (1992): 39-63; William Dusingberre, "Mothers and Children," in *Them Dark Days: Slavery in the American Rice Swamps* (2000): 235-247; Jeanne-Mououssamy-Ashe, *Daufuskie Island*

## **Week 7 Gender and Sexuality in Africa and the Diaspora**

2/25-2/27 **Lectures:** Gender and Sexuality in Africa and the Diaspora; Gender expressions and motherhood

**Reading:** Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 26 (2008): 1-14; Excerpts from *Early Caribbean Slave Narratives* and *Zong!*

## **Week 8 Kinship, Lineage, and Family**

3/4-3/6 **Lectures:** Kinship and Lineage in Africa and the Americas; Shipmates and runaway communities

**Reading:** Walter Hawthorne, "'Being now, as it were, one family': Shipmate bonding on the slave vessel Emilia, in Rio de Janeiro and throughout the Atlantic world," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 45 (2008): 53-77.

**Week 9      Review for Midterm Essay**

3/11-3/13      Review for Midterm Essay

ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE 3/14

**Week 10      Spirituality, Religion, and Healing**

3/25-3/27      **Lectures:** Healing in West and Central Africa; Transformations in Brazil and St. Domingue

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

**Week 11      Runaways, Rebellions, and Revolution**

4/1-4/3      **Lectures:** Maroons, and Rebels in Brazil, the Caribbean, and Central America; The Haitian Revolution

**Reading:** Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "An Unthinkable History: The Haitian Revolution as a Non-Event," in Trouillot, *Silencing the Past* (1995): 70-107.

ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE 4/7

**Week 12      Language and Islam**

4/8-4/10      **Lectures:** African language vocabularies and dictionaries; Islam in the African Diaspora

**Reading:** Brand, *A Map to the Door of No Return*, 1-112.

**Week 13      Creolization and Afterlives of Slavery**

4/15-4/17      **Lectures:** Creolization and the afterlives of slavery in the Americas

**Reading:** Brand, *A Map to the Door of No Return*, 113-226.

**Week 14      Review for Final Essay**

4/22            Review for final essay

ASSIGNMENT #4 DUE 4/30

## OTHER NOTES

### Attendance

Frequent unexcused absences will result in a low 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](#).