NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
HISTORY V55.0532
WORLD CULTURES:
THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

Fall 2009
Professor Michael Gomez
Office: King Juan Carlos I Center 427
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2:00-4:00pm
Office Phone: 212-998-8624

BOOKS FOR PURCHASE

Robert J. Allison, ed., *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*
Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*
Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*
Michael Gomez, *Reversing Sail*
Esteban Montejo, *Biography of a Runaway Slave*
Nancy Prince, *A Black Woman's Journey through Russia and Jamaica*
Irma Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations: Caribbean Immigrants of the Harlem Community*

OVERVIEW

This course is an introduction to the history of the African diaspora; that is, the history of the dispersal of Africans and their descendants throughout much of the world. From antiquity, such populations have made their way through the realms of the Mediterranean and Europe, Islam, Asia, and the Americas. At times their movement has been voluntary; often it was compelled. Throughout their long history, Africans have been both conqueror and conquered, slaveholder and enslaved. In all circumstances, they have made significant and lasting contributions to the economies and cultures of the societies into which they were introduced.

We will attempt to follow the progression of this Diaspora, in effect a series of diasporas, both temporally and thematically. Our queries are multiple: What were the conditions that led to their dispersals? What were the circumstances under which Africans were received? If introduced under conditions of inequality, what are the legacies of those inequalities? How was the fabric of the society in question altered? What have been the cultural manifestations of the African presence? How have technologies and industries been impacted by their contributions? How have notions of collective identity changed over time? To what extent have the experiences throughout the African diaspora converged/diverged?
All assigned readings should be prepared prior to class to fully engage the learning experience. However, assigned readings are designed to complement the weekly lectures and recitations, providing continuity, context, and interaction. Student attendance is therefore expected.

**Grade Criteria**

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage of Final Grade</th>
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<td>Response Papers</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>Attendance/Participation</td>
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**Response papers** are to be 2-3pp in length (double-spaced, normal font) and argumentative. Assignments will be issued every two to three weeks, and will be graded on an A-F scale. *All assignments must be completed to pass the course.*

**Policies**

**Recording and Transcription:** Audio-taping and other methods of mechanized recording are not permitted unless authorized by the professor.

**Late Work:** Any work submitted after the particular due date will suffer the loss of one whole grade. *Late work will not be accepted once the Final Exam Period begins.*

**Probity:** Violations of academic probity will meet with a response in conformity with official university policy. See attached addenda on academic guidelines and integrity.

**Objectives**

As a result of completing History V55.0532, each student will have:

- demonstrated a familiarity with the historical development of the African Diaspora.
- critically read primary texts.
- successfully written analytical response papers.
- successfully completed a final examination.

**Blackboard**

Please regularly consult Blackboard for syllabi, addenda, assignments, and all information pertinent to the course.

**Lecture Schedule:** Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00am to 12:15pm

**Lecture Location:** 19 West 4th Street, Room 101

**Recitation Schedules and Preceptors** are all on Wednesdays as follows:
LECTURE SCHEDULE

Sept 8 and 10
Egyptian Dawn/Nubian Ascendancy/Graeco-Roman World
Assigned Reading:
Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 1-17
William Leo Hansberry, *African and Africans as Seen by Classical Writers* (excerpts)
Further Reading:

Sept 15 and 17
Africans in Judeo-Christian Sacred Writing
Assigned Reading:
Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 18-28
*Kebra Negast* (or *The Queen of Sheba*)
Further Reading:
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Oct 13 and 15  Slavery in the Americas
Assigned Reading:  Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 82-108
Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

Further Reading:

Oct 20 and 22  Slavery in the Americas (continued)
Assigned Reading:  Esteban Montejo, *Biography of a Runaway Slave*

Oct 27 and 29  Revolt
Assigned Reading:  Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 109-141
Prince, *A Black Woman's Journey through Russia and Jamaica*

Further Reading:

Nov 3 and 5  Freedom (?)
Assigned Reading:  Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 141-161
Verene Shepherd and Hilary Beckles, eds., *Caribbean Freedom*, 12-20, 132-140, 192-214, 238-244, 274-283 (excerpts)

Nov 10 and 12

Reconnecting: Movement and Belief

Assigned Reading:

Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 162-175

Irma Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations: Caribbean Immigrants of the Harlem Community*

Further Reading:


Nov 17 and 19

Cultural Efflorescence

Assigned Reading:

Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 175-192

Irma Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations*

Amy Jacques-Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* (excerpts)

Literary, Visual, and Musical Samples (to be provided)

Further Reading:

Dec 1 and 3 | Post-World War Two Developments
Assigned Reading: Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 193-203
Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*
LeRoi Jones, *Blues People*, (excerpts)

Dec 8 and 10 | Post-World War Two Developments (continued)
Assigned Reading: Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 203-219
Santiago, *Boricua: Influential Puerto Rican Writings* (excerpts)
Benedita da Silva, *An Afro-Brazilian Woman’s Story of Politics and Love* (excerpts)

Dec 15 | Postmodern Meditations
Assigned Reading: Contemporary Examples (to be provided)

Dec 15 | Last Day of Classes

Dec 16 | Reading Day

Dec 17-23 | Final Exam Period