Course Description
Over the course of the semester we will consider the Black Atlantic as a socio-cultural and economic space from the first arrival of Africans in the ‘New World,’ beginning around in the 15th century, through the rise of slavery in the Americas, continuing on to slave emancipation and decolonization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. During this class we will trace the origins and importance of the concept of the Black Atlantic within wider international political contexts of European imperial expansion, paying special attention to the changing social, cultural and economic relations that shaped community formation among people of African descent and laid the foundations for modern political and economic orders. Topics to be covered include African enslavement and settlement in Africa and the Americas; the development of transatlantic racial capitalism; variations in politics and culture between empires in the Atlantic world; creolization, plantation slavery and slave society; the politics and culture of the enslaved; the Haitian Revolution; slave emancipation; and contemporary black Atlantic politics and racial capitalism.

Required Texts The following texts are required and are available for purchase at Shakespeare & Co. on Broadway near Waverly Place and are on reserve at Bobst Library.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History (Beacon, 1995)
Various articles and chapters are posted on NYUClasses or accessible through a library search engine. If there is more than one reading per session, please read in the order they are listed on the syllabus.

Please note, when you have a reading from NYUClasses you are required to print it out—OR have a copy with you on a pdf reading device—and bring it with you to class and recitation. Failing to do so will seriously affect your class participation grade.

**Assignments**

You should leave here with an introduction to the overlapping phenomena that comprise the history of the African Diaspora—modern economies, race, cultural practices, religious beliefs, and the mobilizing of power to both construct and oppose racial and economic hierarchies. You should also leave here with a clear understanding of what it means to write and read in an historical mode both critically and analytically.

You have a series of written assignments due over the course of the semester. These assignments are designed to support our work in the classroom and recitations and must be handed in on time. It goes without saying that all written work must be original, any plagiarism will result in an “F” in the course.

⭐ Plagiarism will not be tolerated in any form. Please read NYU’s statement on Academic Integrity here: [http://cas.nyu.edu/object/bulletin1012.ug.academicpolicies#ACADEMIC](http://cas.nyu.edu/object/bulletin1012.ug.academicpolicies#ACADEMIC), and visit Northwestern University’s website [http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html) on avoiding plagiarism for a comprehensive discussion of what plagiarism entails.

Papers must be written using standard Chicago Manual of Style (also known as Turabian) citation form. This form uses footnotes for references, not parenthesis. **Any paper that doesn't follow standard citation guidelines will be returned to you without a grade.** Citation format is quite specific—even if you believe that you know how to construct your citations use this website [http://library.duke.edu/research/citing/within/turabian.html](http://library.duke.edu/research/citing/within/turabian.html) as a starting point.

**Short Primary Source Papers.** You have a total of four of these papers due over the course of the semester. You will note that there are 5 opportunities to hand in one of these papers—thus you may opt out of one assignment. They are short (3-4 pages) and are intended to be an exercise in reading and interpreting evidence. Please note, while they are relatively short, **formal citation practices are required**, these are not stream of consciousness response papers.

**Film Response Papers.** We will see three films this semester. You are required to post a 2 page discussion of the film on NYUClasses before the recitation following the screening of each film. These discussions should briefly describe the film, and then
discuss how the film illuminates or interrupts the readings and lectures that precede it. These response papers are part of your recitation grade.

There will be a midterm and final exam.

Recitation Participation 30%
Short Papers 30%
Exams 40%

It is your responsibility to keep copies of all written work and to regularly check NYUClasses for any updates or changes to the course schedule.

KEY:

☆ Written work due in class or recitation
➢ Readings available on NYUClasses
❖ Readings Available through Bobst-accessed database.

1. Thinking Critically about History: Historiography and the Study of the Black Atlantic

Question: What is historiography? What factors have shaped the development of the Black Atlantic concept in the 20th and 21st centuries?

Tuesday, January 28   Introductions.
Lecture: What is the Black Atlantic?

Thursday January 30
Lecture: Defining Diaspora
❖ Eric Williams, “Massa Day Done (Public Lecture at Woodford Square, 22 March 1961),” Callaloo, vol. 20, no. 4 (1997), 725-730. [Project MUSE]

2. Trade, Encounters, Movement

How should we approach the slave trade? Are questions of morality relevant to the historical study of African enslavement in the New World? Some scholars have argued that slavery formed the basis of modern capitalism in the Atlantic World. Do you agree?
What role did Africans play in the slave trade’s transformation of the Atlantic World?

Tuesday February 4
Lecture: A Trade in Persons
• Manning, Chap 2, “Connections to 1600”

**Extra Credit Assignment:** Attend Gallatin Roundtable on *12 Years a Slave*, "Slaves on Screen: Atlantic Slavery in Contemporary Cinema." It will take place on February 5th at 6p (1 Washington Place, Labowitz Theater Ground Fl), submit 2 page response paper by Friday.

**Thursday February 6**

*Lecture: Making Human Commodities*


**3. Cultures and Economies—Crafting a Present/Crafting a Past**

*What does Enslavement mean? What does slavery “MAKE”? How does the story of enslavement get told? What alternatives are there to the stories that we may already know?*

**Tuesday February 11**

*Lecture: Producing Slavery—What slave societies make.*

- Manning, Chap 3, “Survival, 1600-1800”

*NYUClasses*

**Thursday February 13** Primary source paper on Equiano due before class

*Lecture: What does it mean to tell the story of slavery? For the enslaved? For us? How do we tell the story?*

- Excerpts from Olaudah Equiano’s *Interesting Narrative* [NYU Classes]

**Tuesday February 18**

*Screening: Atlantico negro: na rota dos Orixás = Black Atlantic: on the Orixás Route* VC 13785 Film response due in recitation.

18 February Extra Credit Attend screening of The Stuart Hall Project (dir. John Akomfrah, 2013) 6:30pm, Room 471, 20 Cooper Square, submit a 2 page response paper by Friday.

Thursday February 20
Lecture: The Creation of a Usable Past

4. Freedoms Taken
What factors led to the Haitian Revolution? What were the connections between events in France and Saint Domingue in the revolutionary era? Was the Haitian Revolution merely an extension of the French Revolution? What was the transnational context of the Haitian Revolution and its aftermath? How might an understating of Haiti’s position in the 19th century world inform our view of modern day Haiti?

Tuesday February 25
Lecture: Unthinkability: Haiti and the Notion of Revolution
- Manning, Chap 4, “Emancipation, 1800-1900.”

Thursday, February 27 Primary source response to Haitian Revolution documents due before class
Lecture: Obtaining Freedom
- Choose ten readings from the Dubois and Garrigus volume. Indicate clearly on your response paper which documents you’ve read. Be sure to include one from each of the six sections and end with the Constitution.

5. Anti-Slavery and Emancipation in the Black Atlantic
What role did Africans and people of African descent, enslaved and free, play in the growth of British Atlantic abolitionism?

Tuesday, March 4
Lecture: Reversing Diaspora: Voyagers to Sierra Leone
- Alexander Byrd, Captives and Voyagers: Black Migrants Across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World on Sierra Leone [NYUClasses]
Thursday March 6 Primary source response to Walker due before class.
Lecture: Persistence of Slavery in the Age of Freedom
  ▶ Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Colored Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America, (Boston, Massachusetts, September 28, 1829).

What is the afterlife of slavery? How do we chart the enduring legacy of the commerce in human beings into the 19th and 20th century? What are the institutional reverberations of hereditary racial slavery?

Tuesday March 11
Lecture: The Zong—Histories and Reverberations

Thursday March 13 MIDTERM EXAM

Spring Break Mar.17-Mar.23
  • Manning, Chap 5 Citizenship, 1900-1960, over the break.

7. Claims on Africa—Economics, Culture, and Display
Does the end of the trans-Atlantic slave trade signal new relationships between Europe, The Americas, and Africa? What are the relationships between Empire and Culture? How is Africa rendered in the Western imaginary in the 20th century in ways connected to and distinct from earlier imagery?

Tuesday March 25
Lecture: Acquisitions of Africa—Scrambles.
  ➢ Frederick Cooper, “Africa in a Capitalist World,” in Darlene Clark Hine and Jacqueline McLeod eds. Comparative History of Black People in Diaspora (Indian University Press, 1999) 391-418 [NYUClasses]
  ➢ Steve Feierman, “Africa in History,” in Gyan Prakash, After Colonialism (Princeton, 1994) [NYUClasses].

Thursday March 27
Lecture: Acquisition of Africa--Exhibitions

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Tuesday April 1

- **Lecture: Ethnographic Display and Violent Response**
  - NYTimes articles on Ota Benga. *Please read in order of date of publication* [NYUClasses]

Thursday April 3

- **Lecture: Lynchings**
  - Readings TBA

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8. *Renaissances and Nationalism—Culture and Anti-Colonial Critique in the Early Twentieth Century Atlantic*

*How do formerly enslaved people navigate their own relationship to the Caribbean and to Africa? What is the relationship between an African past and the notion of a collective present? How do Diasporic peoples produce and defy 20th century racial solidarity?*

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Tuesday April 8

- **Primary Source Paper due in Class**
- **Lecture: Haitian Occupation**

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Thursday April 10

- Penny von Eschen, Chap 4, “The Diaspora Moment,” in *Race Against Empire* (Cornell, 1997) [NYU Classes]

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9. *Black Culture in the Age of Black Power*

*What are the connections between Africa, the idea of Africa, and the US Civil Rights movement? How do politics and culture come together at this historic moment? What is the relationship between Africa and the symbol of Africa?*

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Tuesday April 15

- **Screening: Once We Were Kings**
  - **Film response due in recitation**
Thursday April 17
Lecture: Circuits of Nationalisms and Diplomacy
➢ READINGS TBA

10. Consuming Pleasures?: Reconfigurations of Black Capital in the late-20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} Centuries

What is racial capitalism in the contemporary moment? What is Post-Racialism? What can afro-billionaires of the black Atlantic tell us about capitalism, race and ideology? Given what we have learned about the transatlantic slave trade, how have configurations of racial capitalism changed over time? What do the readings suggest about how racial capitalism is organized now? How do you view the concept of ‘post-Blackness’ in light of national and global formations of capital? Is the concept valid? Why or why not?

Tuesday April 22 **Primary Source Paper on Sapeurs Due in Class**
Lecture—Consuming Pleasures—Flipping the Script
➢ “The Sapeurs,” [The Fader.com](http://www.thefader.com/2012/10/05/the-sapeurs-style-wars/#/0)
➢ Touré, “Keep It Real is a Prison,” in [Who’s Afraid of Post-Blackness? What it Means to be Black Now](Free Press, 2011). [NYU Classes]

Thursday April 24
Lecture—Consuming Pleasures—Shopping and Travels
Film Viewing; Stephanie Black. Life and Debt, (New York: New Yorker Video, 2003) In Recitations.

Tuesday April 29 **Film response due in recitation.**
Lecture: Navigating Race and Purchasing Power.
Thursday May 1  
**Lecture: Sports and Racial Logics** 

### 11. Bodies for Sale?  
*Some argue that the transatlantic slave trade marked the first historical instance of the mass commodification of human bodies. How do this unit’s readings deal with human commodification? How does the process and practice of bodily commodification intersect with categories of race, gender and class?*

Tuesday May 6  
**Lecture: Modern Trades: Bodies and Babies** 

### 12. Re-Circulations  
*What are some of the intellectual and affective (emotional) difficulties of grappling with the slave past in the contemporary moment? How does one accept tragedy without losing sight of hope for a liberatory political future?*

Thursday May 8  
**Lecture: The Complicated Notion of Home** 

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Final Exam Thursday May 15<sup>th</sup> 10-11:50am