CULTURES and CONTEXTS:
THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

Fall 2017
Professor Michael Gomez
Office: King Juan Carlos I Center 502
Office Hours: Tuesday, 12:30-2:00pm, or by appt.
Office Phone: 212-998-8624
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BOOKS FOR PURCHASE

Robert J. Allison, ed., The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano
Aimé Césaire, Discourse on Colonialism
Maria de los Reyes Castillo Bueno (and Daisy Rubiera Castillo), Revita: The Life of a Black Cuban Woman in the Twentieth Century
Ta-Nehisi Coates, Between the World and Me
Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass
Michael Gomez, Reversing Sail
Imbolo Mbue, Behold the Dreamers
Irma Watkins-Owens, Blood Relations: Caribbean Immigrants of the Harlem Community
August Wilson, Fences

OVERVIEW

This course is an introduction to the histories and cultures of the African diaspora, a working definition of which is the dispersal of Africans and their descendants throughout much of the world. From antiquity, these communities and individuals have made their way through the Mediterranean and Europe, the central Islamic lands, Asia, and the Americas. At times voluntary, their movement was often compelled. Over the longue durée of history, Africans have been both conqueror and conquered, slaveholder and enslaved. In every circumstance, they have made significant and enduring contributions - economically, culturally, and politically.

We 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 societies 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, and are designed to complement the lectures and recitations, providing continuity, context, and interaction. Student attendance is therefore critical.

All books for purchase are also on reserve in Bobst. All assigned readings not available for purchase will be made available electronically.

**Grade Criteria**

Response Papers - 60% of final grade  
Final Exam - 30% of final grade  
Attendance/Participation - 10% of final grade

Response papers are to be 3-4pp in length (double-spaced, normal font) and argumentative. Assignments will be issued approximately every three weeks, and will be graded on an A-F scale. All assignments must be completed to pass the course.

**Policies**

**Recording and Transcription:** Audiotaping 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 substantive understanding of the African Diaspora’s historical development.  
- critically read primary texts.  
- successfully written analytical response papers.  
- successfully completed a final examination.

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

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

**Lecture Location:** 12 Waverly Place, Room G08

**Recitation Preceptors, Meeting Times, and Locations (all meet on Fridays):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Preceptor</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>002</td>
<td>Wendi M. Muse</td>
<td>12:30-1:45pm, SILV Room 510</td>
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<tr>
<td>003</td>
<td>Wendi M. Muse</td>
<td>2:00-3:15pm, 25 W 4, C-18</td>
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<tr>
<td>004</td>
<td>Danielle J. Beaujon</td>
<td>12:30-1:45pm, SILV Room 512</td>
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<tr>
<td>005</td>
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<td>2:00-3:15pm, 25 W 4, C-19</td>
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<tr>
<td>006</td>
<td>Keyanah B. Freeland</td>
<td>12:30-1:45pm, TISC LC1</td>
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<tr>
<td>007</td>
<td>Keyanah B. Freeland</td>
<td>2:00-3:15pm, 7 E 12, Room 131</td>
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**LECTURE SCHEDULE**

**Sept 5 and 7**

*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 12 and 14**

*Africans in Judeo-Christian Sacred Writing*

**Assigned Reading:**

Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 18-28

*Kebra Negast* (or *The Queen of Sheba*)

**Further Reading:**

St. Clair Drake, *Black Folk Here and There: An Essay in History*
and Anthropology, 2 vols.; Steven Kaplan, The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia: From Earliest Times to the Twentieth Century; Sergew Hable Sellassie, Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270; Donald N. Levine, Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of a Multiethnic Society; Cain Hope Felder, Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class, and Family; Charles B. Copher, Black Biblical Studies: An Anthology of Charles B. Copher; James Cone, For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church.

Documentary:  
Wonders of the African World

Sept 19 and 21 Imagination

Assigned Reading:  
Gomez, Reversing Sail, 29-55

Alexander Popović, The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq in the 3rd/9th Century (excerpts)


John Hunwick and Eve Troutt Powell, eds., The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam (excerpts)

Further Reading:  


Music:  
North Africa and Egypt; Gnawa
**Documentary:**  
_Saints and Spirits_  

**Sept 26 and 28**  
Global Slave Trades  

**Assigned Reading:**  
Gomez, _Reversing Sail_, 59-81  
Allison, ed., _Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano_  

**Further Reading:**  
Michael A. Gomez, _Exchanging Our Country Marks_ (1998);  
Marcus Rediker, _The Slave Ship: A Human History_ (2007);  
Mariana P. Candido, _An African Slaving Port and the Atlantic World_ (2013);  
Joseph E. Harris, _The African Diaspora_; Joseph E. Harris, _Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora_, 2nd ed.;  
Ralph Austen, _African Economic History: Internal Development and External Dependency_;  
David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert Klein, _The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM_;  
Joseph E. Inikori, _Forced Migration: The Impact of the Export Slave Trade on African Societies_;  
Patrick Manning, _Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades_;  
Joseph C. Miller, _Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830_;  
Guy A. Settipane, _Columbus and the New World: Medical Implications_.

**Oct 3**  
Diaspora, DNA, and the Intersection of History and Science  

**Assigned Reading:**  
[http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2818934/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2818934/)  
http://rd.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00439-006-0261-7#page-1

Further Reading:

Chris Stringer, *Lone Survivors: How We Came to be the Only Humans on Earth* (Times Books, 2012)

Fatimah Jackson, “Ethnogenetic Layering (EL): an alternative to the traditional race model in human variation and health disparity studies,” *Annals of Human Biology* 35(2) 2008: 121-44
http://informahealthcare.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03014460801941752

http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3257290/


http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2675968/

http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3056271/

http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3009670/

Oct 5 and 10

Slavery and Resistance in the Americas

Assigned Reading: Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 82-141

Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

David Walker’s *Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America, Written in Boston, State of Massachusetts, September 28, 1829*


Oct 9

Fall Recess, No Classes Scheduled

Oct 12 and 17 and 19

Slavery and Resistance in the Americas (cont.)

Assigned Reading: Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 109-141

de los Reyes Castillo Bueno, *Reyita: The Life of a Black Cuban Woman*


**Film**

*Sankofa*

**Oct 24 and 26**

“Freedom”

**Assigned Reading:**

Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 141-161


Verene Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles, eds., *Caribbean Freedom*, 12-20, 132-140, 192-214, 238-244, 274-283 (excerpts)

Hilary McD. Beckles, “Return to the Scene of the Crime”: *Address before the British House of Commons, 16 July 2014*

**Further Reading:**


**Music:**

Mento, Calypso/Kaiso, Ska, Rocksteady, Soca, Reggae, Dancehall

**Oct 31 and Nov 2**

Reconnecting: Movement and Belief

**Assigned Reading:**

Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 162-175

Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations*

LeRoi Jones, *Blues People*, (excerpts)

**Further Reading:**


**Music:**

*Negro Spirituals, Blues, Gospel*

Nov 7 and 9  
**Reconnections and Transformations**

**Documentary:**  
*Ilê Aiyê*

**Documentary:**  
*Against the Odds*

Nov 14 and 16  
**Cultural Efflorescence**

Assigned Reading:  
Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 175-192

Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations*

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

Further Reading:  

**Music:**  
*Jazz*

Nov 20-26  
**Thanksgiving Break**

November 28  
**Post WW II and The Great Migration North**

Assigned Reading:  
Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 193-203
Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*

August Wilson, *Fences*


**Film:** *Fences*

**Nov 30**

The Afro-Latin@ Experience

Assigned Reading: Gomez, *Reversing Sail,* 203-19

Fidel Castro, *History Will Absolve Me (La historia me absolverá)*

Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores, *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States,* excerpts


**Music:** Bomba y Plena, Palo, Samba, Son, Salsa, Rumba, Tango, Merengue, Bachata, Reggaetón

**Film/Documentary:** Negrita (*o Black in Latin America*)

**Dec 5 and 7**

Politics in the Americas


Coates, *Between the World and Me*


Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, 191-220 (chapter 7)

**Further Reading:** Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (2010)

**Documentary:** 13th (and/or When We Were Kings)

**Music:** Soul, Motown, Funk, “Stax,” R & B, Hip Hop

Dec 12

“Legislative Day” – Class Does Not Meet

Dec 14

Africa, America, and Europe: “Diasporas” in Conversation and Contrast

**Assigned Reading:** Taiye Selasi, “Bye-Bye Babar,” *Lip #5 Africa* March 3, 2005

Imbolo Mbue, *Behold the Dreamers*

http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/04/10/the-desperate-journey-of-a-trafficked-girl


*Media:* An African City

Dec 15 Last Day of Classes

Dec 16-17 Reading Days

Dec 18-22 Fall Semester Exams