We should start with a question—what do we mean by the “Black Atlantic”? This course introduces students to the history and of the African Diaspora and to its cultural, economic, and oppositional consequences. It differs from a history of the African Diaspora—which would be concerned primarily with mapping the dispersals of African and African descendant peoples throughout the world—in that our core concerns are the particular relationship between Africa, Europe, and the Americas and the various ideological, political, and cultural consequences of that relationship as it circles back, forth, and around the Atlantic Ocean.
In order to answer this question, we are going to be reading across a range of academic disciplines. These include History, Economics, Anthropology, Literature, and Philosophy. As you read and participate in class, identifying the disciplinary interventions that we are encountering should be high on your list for class preparation.

The course is organized both historically and geographically—we move from the 15th century forward and from Africa to Europe, the Americas, and back again. What we will learn is not comprehensive, but should provide you with a clear understanding of some of the core issues that both propel African people into the Atlantic and determine their experiences once in the Americas. During this class we will trace the origins and importance of the concept of the Black Atlantic in the context of European imperial expansion, paying special attention to the social relations that shaped community formation among people of African descent and laid the foundations for their political and economic institutions. We will explore these developments through the lens of historical events that include the experience of capture and transport, the work of slave labor, the fights for Emancipation, 19th and 20th century colonialism and Freedom Movements, and finally the contemporary struggles over what this history has meant and how to remember it. This is the Social History piece of what is essentially an interdisciplinary approach to our explorations this semester.

This course explores the Black Atlantic as a socio-cultural and economic space from the fifteenth-century arrival of Africans in the ‘New World,’ through the rise of slavery in the Americas, continuing on to slave emancipation and decolonization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and concluding with contemporary black life in the Atlantic world. The intention here is to introduce you to important moments in the history of the Black Atlantic and to engage, through interdisciplinary writings, with questions of meaning-making. This is the Philosophy/Cultural Studies piece of the course (there are others, watch for them).

Each week will we examine a distinct time and place, but there are thematic threads that link the lectures, readings, and discussions and that should guide you through the semester. The questions or themes throughout revolve broadly around Culture, Economies, and Opposition.

You should leave this course 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 both critically and analytically in an historical mode.

Course Requirements
We are a small group this semester as we are embarking on a bit of an experiment by linking two “sections” of this course meeting simultaneously in Accra and New York City. Students in each course will have some overlapping and some distinct assignments.
**Required Readings**
All of the readings listed below are required to be completed prior to our class meetings on the day they are assigned. You must bring copies of the reading to class to refer to during discussion. The readings will help you to contextualize the lecture and to participate in class discussion. While the course is organized historically, we will encounter readings from a range of disciplines and thus it is important to approach each reading with a clear sense that you are responsible for understanding its positionality. Please take careful reading notes on all texts. They—your notes—will be very important for class discussion and your writing assignments. For the first 4 weeks of class you are required to fill in a reading response form prior to our Tuesday meeting. Please bring a physical copy of your form to class both days and hand it in on Thursday after class. In a week with multiple readings, choose ONE for which to submit a form. These quick responses should serve as a guide for how to read carefully and critically in class.

*The following texts are required and are available for purchase at the NYU bookstore and are on reserve at Bobst Library.*

- Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Duke University Press, 2016)

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 and bring it with you to class and recitation. Failing to do so will seriously affect your class participation grade.

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.

**Class Participation**
Please remember that your participation in class is a crucial part of whether our collective time together will be productive or not. “Participation” means coming to class prepared, having read the readings and each others’ postings. It means having some questions prepared, and some observations about the text already worked out. It means actively listening to lectures and to one another and making connections both to the readings and conversations happening during our meeting time and to those that have happened in the past. Simply saying something in class does NOT constitute excellent class participation.
Writing Assignments
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, and visit Northwestern University’s website on avoiding plagiarism for a comprehensive discussion of what plagiarism entails.

Both your response papers and the longer Critical Essay must be written using standard Chicago Manual of Style (also known as Turabian) citation form. This form uses footnotes for references, not parenthesis. 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 as a starting point.

Response papers/posts. You have short recitation response papers due each week, you can take a pass on up to 4 of them, in other words, at the end of the semester you must have submitted 10 responses. The first two will follow the template you will find on NYU Classes, and the first two are BOTH REQUIRED. Afterwards, please write them independent of the template. These should be 250-350 words, less than 2 pages. It is a challenge to write succinctly. Once you have written your response paper, please also make a blog post. The post can go up before either class session during the week, but must be up before Thursday morning, no later than 11pm Wednesday night. The blog posts are another opportunity for you to engage the reading but in a broader manner. When posting a blog response, please take the opportunity to write in a “voice” that is public facing. While the blog is not a public site, it is something that will be read by your peers. Keep in mind that you are writing across two global sites, and that some of the readings are not shared. In other words, at the start of your post, please provide a full citation of the reading you are discussion, and link it to the overall topic of the week.

Reading Posts. One of the aspects of your class participation grade will be your engagement with the work of your peers. To this end, you should see the blog site as a space for discussion, virtual or actual. Please read the blog before class convenes on Tuesdays and Thursdays, taking the time to comment there or to bring your comments into the face-to-face discussions in class.

Final Paper You also have a longer critical essay on the question of Commemoration. This is a 7-10 page essay due the final day of the semester.

Final Grades
Participation 30%
Final Paper 40%
Posts/responses 30%
Technology in the Classroom

It is not clear to us that using a laptop to take notes is the best way to process information. Whether taking notes on a keyboard or by hand is the best strategy is open for debate, what is not debatable is the fact that a computer screen is a powerful lure and can distract even the most well intentioned student. Please remember that professors CAN SEE YOU. And can sometimes actually see what you are doing. When you start to zone out in the multicolored glow of your screen it is always clear to us that you are no longer paying attention. Checking email, watching texts come in, posting on social media, or reading the news is also distracting to those sitting next to and behind you. We reserve the right to limit or prohibit laptop use as needed.
Defining Terms Key Question—How does the Black Atlantic function as history and as a way of structuring contemporary meaning?

Tuesday September 3rd
DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK: Situating Us In Time And Space/Origin Stories

Thursday Sept 5: No Class
• Read and POST [deadline Thursday noon est.] Michel Rolph Trouillot, Chapter 3, “An Unthinkable History: The Haitian Revolution as a Non-Event, 70-107, Silencing the Past. Available as an ebook on Bobst
  https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.04595

History and the start of the Black Atlantic Key Questions—What are the origins of the Atlantic slave trade?

September 10th
DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK: Making Human Commodities
Readings

September 12th
DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK: Making Meaning
Readings
• Olaudah Equiano’s. 1789. The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself, Chapters 1 and 2 [online version available through Bobst, Proquest Literature Online].

Economic systems/Cultural systems Key Question—What does slavery “MAKE”?

September 17th
DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK: What Slavery Produces—Crops
Readings
September 19th
DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK: What Slavery Produces--Identities
Readings
- David Wheat, Chap 6, “Becoming Latin,” in Atlantic Africans, pp216-252

Freedoms Taken and The Force of Law Key Question—What is the relationship between slavery and freedom?

September 24th
DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK: The Haitian Revolution
Readings
- Julius Scott, Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution, Chapters 1 and 2.

September 26th
DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK: Revolutionary Circuits in the Black Atlantic.
- Julius Scott, Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution, Chapters 3 and 4.
- The Haitian Constitution, 1805. NYU Classes.

The Origins of Civil Society
Question— How does slavery underpin some of our most important modern institutions?

OCTOBER 1ST
DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK: Conceptualizing Freedom, The Civil War and Beyond
Readings
- Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”

OCT 3rd NO CLASS
Read and POST In advance of next week’s discussions [deadline Thursday noon est.]
Finance, Race, and the Afterlives of Slavery Question—What are the economic aftermaths of slavery on modern life?

OCTOBER 8
DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK: Financial Reverberations (Legacies of Slaveownership project).
Readings

October 10
WALKING TOUR WITH KAMAU WARE
Follow up Posts due by 6pm, Thursday, October 10th

Tuesday October 15th is a Monday Schedule – NO CLASS

Oct 17

Africa, Modern Colonialism, and Race at the Start of the 20th Century Key Question: Does the end of the trans-Atlantic slave trade signal new relationships between Europe, The Americas, and Africa?

OCT 22
DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK: Political Reverberations and Scrambles for Africa
Readings

Oct 24
DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK: Scrambles and Refusals, Resisting European and American incursions.
Readings
- The Treaty of Berlin (1885)
Navigating the new Century *Key Question*— *What is the relationship between an African past and the notion of a collective present?*

**OCT 29**

**DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK:** Ethnographic Display and Anti-Colonial Movements

**Readings**

- *Nytimes* articles on Ota Benga. *Please read in order of date of publication* [nyclasses]

**Oct 31**

**DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK:** Reckoning with the Dead

- Christina Sharpe, Chapter 1, *The Wake*, in *The Wake*.

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**Black Modernities/Africa as Catalyst  *Key Questions*— *How do freedom movements criss-cross the Atlantic in the 20th Century?***

**NOV 5**

**DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK:** Disposable populations and genocidal experiments.

**Readings**


**NOV 7**

**DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK:** Pan-Africanism and American Freedom Movements

**Readings**


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**Racial Capitalism?: Creativity, Commerce, and Consumption in the late-20th through 21st Centuries  *Key Question*— *What is racial capitalism in the contemporary moment?***

**NOV 12**

**DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK:** Retellings and aspirations

**READINGS**


**NOV 14th NO CLASS**

- Blog posts due on Sharpe by noon Tuesday.
Navigating Consumption and Desposability in the 21st Century  
Key Question—How do we navigate pleasure, consumption, and race?

Nov 19
DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK: CONSUMING PLEASURES—SHOPPING
Readings
- Film Viewing Stephanie Black. Life and Debt, (New York: New Yorker Video, 2003)

Nov 21st
DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK: Consuming Pleasures—Strutting
Readings

Nov 26th Class Cancelled, be Thankful!

Reparations and Redress and Memorials Key Question—What debts are owed?

Dec 3
DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK: The argument for Reparations
- Ta-Nehisi Coates, The Case for Reparations.

Dec 5
DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK: Charlottesville, Jamaica, and NY City. Remembering and memorializing
Defining Home  Key Question--How do we tell this story?  What is the importance of critical language when describing historical phenomenon?

Dec 12
DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK: Defining Diasporas/Telling Histories

- Brent H. Edwards, “The Uses of Diaspora” Social Text, 66 (Volume 19, Number 1), Spring 2001, pp. 45-73

Dec 10
DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK: The Complicated Notion of Home

Readings
  http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/south_atlantic_quarterly/v101/101.4hartman.htm

Critical Essay due 12/12--Why Memorialize?
See the nyuclasses site for details.