Fall 2021
Professor Michael Gomez
Office: King Juan Carlos I Center 502
Office Hours: Tuesday, 12:30-2:00pm, or by appt.
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Books for Purchase

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Americanah (Anchor, 2014)
Robert J. Allison, ed., The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano
Aimé Césaire, Discourse on Colonialism
María de los Reyes Castillo Bueno (and Daisy Rubiera Castillo), Reyita: The Life of a Black Cuban Woman in the Twentieth Century
Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass
Michael A. Gomez, Reversing Sail (second edition)
Earl Lovelace, The Wine of Astonishment
D.T. Niane, Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali
Irma Watkins-Owens, Blood Relations: Caribbean Immigrants of the Harlem Community

Overview

This course is an introduction into both seminal as well as cutting-edge scholarship on the subject of the African diaspora, for which a working definition 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.

In following the historical progression of the African diaspora - in effect a series of diasporas, both temporally and thematically - our queries will include: With what issues has the scholarship been preoccupied? What leading theoretical perspectives have emerged, and what remains unresolved? What sorts of historical methods can be employed? What is gained by a transnational approach to history, and what is lost? How have notions of collective identity changed over time? To what extent have the experiences throughout the African diaspora converged/diverged?

Diaspora Studies has rapidly emerged as a nexus of fields, and to be sure, there is plenty of disagreement among scholars concerning it, some of which will be explored in this course. Although significant academic interest in the African diaspora is relatively recent, the concept itself is hardly novel. Its formal study has been around for some time, going back at least to the early scholarship and activism of the nineteenth century, featuring such individuals as Edward Blyden, Adelaide Casely-Hayford, and W.E.B. Du Bois. While this course is primarily concerned with history, the full study of the African diaspora is necessarily multi-disciplinary in scope, calling upon a range of erudition and experience for its successful pursuit.

All assigned readings should be prepared prior to class in order to fully engage the learning experience, and are designed to complement the lectures and recitations in providing continuity, context, and interaction. Student attendance is therefore critical.

Grade Criteria

Response Papers (4) - 100 total points for each assignment evaluation
Recitation Attendance/Participation -2 to 2 points, added to each response paper
Extra Credit - % explained below

Response papers are to be 4-5pp in length (double-spaced, normal font) and argumentative.

Assignments will be issued approximately every three weeks, and will be graded on an A-F/100 points scale. Unless otherwise specified, all assignments must be completed to pass the course.

Writing Response Papers

Response papers should include the following elements:

- a thesis statement within the first or second paragraph, specifying your main argument and any subsidiary points, if there are any
- an overview, also within the first or second paragraph, summarizing how the rest of the paper marshals the evidence to support the thesis
- clear organization of information throughout the rest of the paper, in support of the thesis
- a **conclusion** summarizing the thesis and its support
- **proper rendering** of such common words as “among” rather than “amongst”; “toward” and “afterward” – as opposed to “towards” and “afterwards”; “twentieth century,” not “20th century,” etc.
- **avoid contractions in academic writing** – use “that is” and “it is” rather than “that’s” and “it’s”

**Recitation points** will be added to/subtracted from each response paper’s evaluation, to be determined by the TA and as follows (**these are the only options**):

-2 = unacceptable       -1 = poor       1 = good       2 = excellent

**Extra credit** may be earned by attending **designated events** outside of class. There will be at least 3 such events.

**Students will select one (and only one) assignment to which ALL extra credit will be applied, with each designated event worth 1 additional point.** If a student, for example, receives a 79/C+ on the assignment selected, 2 attended designated events will increase the grade to 81/B-, 4 attended designated events will increase the grade to 83/B, and so on. **No more than 6 extra credit points can accrue to the selected assignment.**

**Grading Scale (per Assignment)**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Range</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>90-92</td>
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<td>88-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<td>83-87</td>
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<td>63-67</td>
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<td>&lt; 63</td>
<td>F</td>
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**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 specific due date and time will suffer the loss of **one whole grade. For the first three assignments, late work must be submitted no later than 7 days after the due date and time, OR IT WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AT ALL, AND THE GRADE FOR THE ASSIGNMENT WILL BE ZERO (0). For the fourth assignment, late
work must be submitted no later than 3 days after the due date and time, OR IT WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AT ALL, AND THE GRADE FOR THE ASSIGNMENT WILL BE ZERO (0).

Finally, all work must be completed by the beginning of the Semester Exam Week. No exceptions.

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

**Caution**: Students should avoid copying or appropriating any aspect of the work of current or former students, as well any other source. A single instance of plagiarism will result in a grade of 0 (zero) for the assignment; the 0 be factored into an averaged final grade; and all work must be submitted. A second instance will result in an ‘F’ for the class and referral to the Dean of Students.

**Freedom of Expression**

NYU is committed to helping students who may be facing political risk to participate in their classes in ways that are as safe as possible. We encourage students based in any place that monitors internet use for political content to carefully consider how you can and will participate. If you have any further concerns about political safety, please email asking for a consultation, and we will find a way to discuss the situation as safely as we can.

**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.
- satisfactorily participated in academic discourse.

**NYU Classes**

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

**Lecture Schedule**: Tuesday and Thursday, 2:00-3:15pm
Lecture Location: 12 Waverly, Room G08

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

002: Eric Anderson 12:30-1:45pm, 12 Waverly, L113
003: Eric Anderson 2:00-3:15pm, 12 Waverly, L113
004: Dante Whittaker 12:30-1:45pm, ARC, LL03
005: Dante Whittaker 2:00-3:15pm, 60FA, C04
006: Sonya Williams 12:30-1:45pm, ARC, LL01
007: Sonya Williams 2:00-3:15pm, ARC, LL01

LECTURE SCHEDULE

Sept 2 Classes begin at NYU

Sept 7 and 9 Egyptian Dawn/Nubian Ascendancy/Graeco-Roman World

Assigned Reading: Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 1-20

William Leo Hansberry, *African and Africans as Seen by Classical Writers* (excerpts)


Sept 14 and 16 Africans in Judeo-Christian Sacred Writing
Assigned Reading: Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 21-31

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


Documentary: *Wonders of the African World*

**Sept 21 and 23** Classical Islam, Africa, and Africans in an Islamic Imagination

Assigned Reading: Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 32-60


*Niane, Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*


Le culte des saints dans l’islam maghrébin; Mohammed Ennaji, Serving the Master: Slavery and Society in Nineteenth-Century Morocco; Y. Hakan Erdem, Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise, 1800-1909; Ehud R. Toledano, Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East.

Music: North Africa and Egypt; Gnawa

Documentary: Saints and Spirits

Sept 28 and 30 Global Slave Trades

Assigned Reading: Gomez, Reversing Sail, 61-70

Allison, ed., Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano


Oct 5 and 7 Global Slave Trades (continued)

Assigned Reading: Gomez, Reversing Sail, 71-89

Oct 12 and 14 Slavery and Resistance in the Americas

Assigned Reading: Gomez, Reversing Sail, 90-122

Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

*1805 Haytian Constitution* [http://faculty.webster.edu/corbetre/haiti/history/earlyhaiti/1805-const.htm](http://faculty.webster.edu/corbetre/haiti/history/earlyhaiti/1805-const.htm)


**Oct 19 and 21**

**Slavery and Resistance in the Americas** (cont.)

Assigned Reading: Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 123-161

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

in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia; Richard Price, Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas.

Film

Sankofa

Oct 26 and 28

“Freedom”

Assigned Reading:

Gomez, Reversing Sail, 161-185

W.E.B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk (excerpts)
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

Nov 2 and 4

Reconnecting: Movement and Belief

Assigned Reading:

Gomez, Reversing Sail, 186-193

Watkins-Owens, Blood Relations, 1-29

LeRoi Jones, Blues People (excerpts)

Further Reading:


**Music:** Negro Spirituals, Blues, Gospel

**Documentary:** Ilê Aiyê

**Nov 9 and 11**

**Reconnecting: Movement and Belief (cont.)**

**Assigned Reading:**

Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 193-200


Lovelace, *The Wine of Astonishment*

**Nov 16 and 18**

**Cultural Efflorescence**

**Assigned Reading:**

Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 200-226


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

Adichie, *Americanah*

**Further Reading:**


**Music:** Jazz

**Documentary:** Against the Odds
Nov 23 thru 25  
Thanksgiving Recess

Nov 30 and Dec 2  
Post WW II

Assigned Reading:  
Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 227--239

Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*

Adichie, *Americanah*

Further Reading:  

Film:  
Fences

Dec 7 and 9  
The Afro-Latinx Experience

Assigned Reading:  
Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 239-262

Fidel Castro, *History Will Absolve Me (La historia me absolverá)*  
[https://www.marxists.org/history/cuba/archive/castro/1953/10/16.htm](https://www.marxists.org/history/cuba/archive/castro/1953/10/16.htm)

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

Further Reading:  

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

Film/Documentary:  
*Black in Latin America*
Dec 14

Black Lives Matter, Globally

Assigned Reading: Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 263-286

Adichie, *Americanah*

https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/black-lives-matter-jamil-smith-1014442/


https://www.globalafricanworker.com/content/call-jamestown-0

https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2020/08/the-abolition-movement

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


Reference Sites: *This is Not a Riot* https://www.notariot.com/


Taiye Selasi, *Ghana Must Go*; Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah* (Anchor, 2014); Imbolo Mbue, *Behold the Dreamers* (2017); African Diaspora Youth Network in Europe


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

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

Music: Soul, Motown, Funk, “Stax,” R & B, Hip Hop
Dec 14    Last Day of Class

Dec 15    Reading Day

Dec 16-22    Semester Exams

Media:    An African City
          Guangzhou Dream Factory

Assigned Reading:


Carlos D. Bustamante, et al., “Genome-wide patterns of populations structure and admixture in West Africans and African Americans,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 107(2) 12 January 2010: 786-91
http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2818934/


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/

Michael Hammer, “Autosomal Resequence Data Reveal Late