By employing the heuristic concept of diaspora—and specifically the African diaspora—this course focuses on the analytical work generated by studying cultures of movement. As scholars, we might begin by asking whether diaspora complicates our understanding of disciplinary formations—including the normative assumptions that inform the study of society and culture. How does diaspora, for instance, enhance our perspectives on imperial, colonial, national and post-colonial formations and the ways in which they have been historically represented? In utilizing the prism of diaspora we confront the politics of representation through which scholars render meaning out of the past and present. For this reason, diaspora like other categories of analysis engages the vexed terrain of representation whereby scholars frame the subject of their inquiries.

Diaspora brings into relief many of the principle categories and themes informing the social and human sciences. It de-naturalizes many of the foundational assumptions on which contemporary social theory rests. For this reason, we will route our conversations and readings through some of the central concepts defining social theory (state, nation, society, sovereignty, difference, stratification, race, ethnicity, religion, and culture) so as to discern how diaspora might trouble existing forms of knowledge bequeathed to us by the Renaissance, Enlightenment and Modern Era.

On a practical professional level, the course serves as a graduate-level introduction to diasporas in general but the African diaspora in particular. Scholarship on this subject along with its development over time and in distinct settings (the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, England and Continental Europe) introduces us to the historical profession and professionalism. For this reason, we will devote significant time focusing and discussing how various scholars have framed and approached their scholarly projects. Since the African diaspora as a field of study constitutes a relatively novel endeavor, most of the readings draw on works from the last few years. While this conveys a sense of where the field is presently at it also serves to delineate how the African diaspora draws and builds on early forms of inquiry (the history of colonial expansion, the history of slavery and freedom, the history of racial formation, etc.) Over the semester we will constantly need to ask what defines an inquiry, an approach or a perspective as diasporic in scope. In doing so, we will necessarily focus on an earlier body of scholarship that was associated with different fields of inquiry (slavery, race relations, African Studies, Brazilian history, the study of religion, English Cultural Studies).
**Requirements:**

All students will write a sequence of reviews.

First, you will write a short (1000-1500 words) essay on one the first assigned book. This essay should be modeled on the reviews that appear in the *American Historical Review*. Here the emphasis will be on an accurate summary and a minimal evaluation. This review is due on February 18, 2016.

Next, you are to produce a 1500-2000 word comparative review describing and discussing two books from the syllabus. Here again you are too focus largely on an accurate summary but now use the comparison as the basis for expanding your evaluation. This essay is due in class on March 3, 2016.

Your third essay will comprise a review of three books from the syllabus. In this review you should focus on a singular or related theme. Here the focus shifts from an accurate summary to delving into a theme that emerges from the books. This essay, 7-10 pages in length, is due on April 7, 2016.

Seminar participants will be asked to produce a brief (five pages) bibliographic summary of a theme of their choosing related to the African Diaspora. Here you are to identify a thematic concern and identify how that theme has developed through the time in the journal literature. This paper like the final essay will be shared with members of the class. This paper will be due April 21, 2016.

The final essay, 12-15 pages in length, requires you to select a book or a theme in consultation with the instructor. In this essay you will be asked to situate the book or theme in the broadest of historiographical and/or analytical context. Reviews that appear in *Reviews in American History* or the *New York Review of Books* can serve as exemplars. Here the focus is for you to bring much more substantial knowledge base than the author’s argument and engagements. You will want to think of historiography in relation to knowledge production, conceptual innovation or theoretical orientations. This review is due May 19, 2016.

All papers need to be submitted electronically as a Word document (no PDFs). Your margins should be 1” and with the 12pt font.

**Key Dates:**

February 18, 2016       First Review Due
March 3, 2016           Second Review Due
April 7, 2016           Third Review Due
April 8, 2016           Conference: “Conceptualizing ‘Afro-Latin America’ Across the Disciplines”
April 12, 2016  Conference: ‘Art, Race & Fluidity in Dominican Republic and Haiti

April 21, 2016  Bibliographic Summary Due


May 19, 2016  Final Paper Due

**Guidelines for Reading & Seminar Discussion:**
Ideally, you should engage all of your readings with the following guidelines and questions (or some similar version) in mind. After reading a book or article take about 20-30 minutes to write your thoughts in relation to the following queries. The questions and your responses are designed to facilitate discussion and serve as a guide for how you should be approaching all the books and articles we read this and every semester.

1. What are the main arguments of the book or article?

2. Why these arguments? i.e., what’s at stake for the author? (this is a question you should ask of everything you read; it is the equivalent of the “what keeps you up at night? question.)

3. What did you learn that you did not know?

4. What are 3 representative or provocative or memorable quotes?

5. What are the book’s strengths? Why do these strengths appeal to you? Why are these particular strengths so apparent to you? What do they say about intellectual interests, commitments, preferences?

6. What are the book’s structural, argumentative or empirical weaknesses? (remember: Be constructively critical [try asking yourself: could I have written this book?])

Why are these particular weaknesses so apparent to you? What do they say about your intellectual interests, commitments, preferences?

7. What footnotes did you turn to the back to look at (there ought to be at least a few!)?

What books, articles or ideas do you want to pursue from this text? (and what system do you have [you need one!] for keeping track of leads like this?)

8. How or why is this book useful to your work? When all is said and done (pros, cons, loved it, hated it, etc.), what is the “take away”?

9. How might this book be useful for teaching?
10. What other kinds of questions or issues do you want to raise in discussion, whether in class today, with a colleague or professor, or in the course of your own work? (why did I boldface or underline certain passages? And not unrelatedly, whom do you know who’s interested in the same kinds of questions you are? how will you make the time to pursue these kinds of questions in conversation, in community? what, where, who are your communites?)

If you address these questions in writing, however briefly, for every book and article you read in the coming weeks and months, you’ll be well on your way toward an annotated reading list by the time your exams. It is a challenging task, but worth thinking about, even in modified form (make a template of your own design, use it as a worksheet for everything you read).

Required Readings:


February 4       Introductions & Course Overview
February 11      Diaspora & the ‘Black’ Public Sphere

February 18      Foundations

February 25      Foundations

March 3          Foundations


March 10         Sate, Society & Sovereignty: Re-thinking Foundations

March 17        Diaspora & the Question of Africa

March 24        Diaspora & the Question of Africa

March 31        Nation and Nationalism

April 7         Nation & Diaspora

April 14        Nation & Diaspora

April 21        Nation & Diaspora

April 28        Spring Break

May 5          Diaspora & the Question of Modernity

May 12         Last Day: A Summation