At its core, HIST 75900 is an African American history readings course designed to introduce students to key historiographical debates in the field. Each week, we will read a recently-published book (and 1-2 journal articles/book chapters, where appropriate). We explore the ways in which scholars in the field have used social, intellectual, cultural, labor, urban, and public history methods to ask different questions—and arrive at different conclusions—about African American Life. Using “public” as a category of analysis, we will consider how different subfields approach the archive and read its gaps and silences, marshal evidence, and determine who and what is worthy of historical inquiry. The aim is to move beyond a debate over “public” vs. “private” to instead focus on how African Americanists have, over time, defined and redefined what “the public” is, how people of African descent engage with/in such spaces, and the political costs/stakes/rewards/pleasures of engagement.

Attendance and participation is mandatory.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

✓ to gain knowledge of key issues and critical debates in the field
✓ to develop a reading list useful for exams in U.S./Af-Am field(s)
✓ to improve historical reading and writing skills
✓ to apply knowledge from this course to students’ own research projects
✓ to create a supportive and rigorous learning environment and intellectual community

ASSIGNMENTS

Weekly Reviews: 2pp critical reviews of each book (on days when student is not leading discussion).

Discussion leader: Lead discussion 1-2x. Offer a brief summary of the text and its major interventions. Choose 3 other texts with which the assigned text is in conversation and explain why/how. Prepare questions to help guide our discussion. The outside texts you select will be added to readings list we craft as a class.
**Intellectual autobiography:** a 3-4pp statement about your intellectual curiosities, research agenda, and special projects you’ve designed/participated in. Learning how to write this genre of essay is important as students begin applying for competitive fellowships.

**Final paper:** a 12-15pp historiographical essay, review essay, or comparable paper that supports your research. You must discuss your paper with me by week 7 and present a brief proposal before spring break.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

1/28 Introduction to course


2/18 LaShawn Harris, *Sex Workers, Psychics, and Numbers Runners* (Univ. of Illinois Press)

2/25 Shannon King, *Whose Harlem is This, Anyway?* (NYU Press)


3/10 Marcia Chatelain, *Franchise* (Liverlight)


3/24 Quincy Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line* (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press)


4/7 ***NO CLASS*** (Wed. schedule)

***SPRING BREAK***


5/12 Discussion of final papers

**Final papers: due 5/19 via email submission (tford1@gc.cuny.edu)**