

The Graduate School and University Center  
City University of New York  
Ph.D. Program in History

Herman L. Bennett  
History 727000: The African Diaspora  
Tuesdays: 6:30 -8:30 p.m.

Fall 2021  
Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description:

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 seminar participants are expected to produce a 20 to 25-page literature review related to the African Diaspora in their own discipline or field of inquiry.

The seminar paper, 20-25 pages in length, requires you to select a range of field defining books and articles in consultation with the instructor. In this review essay, you will be asked to situate the books and articles in the broadest of historiographical and/or analytical context. Here the focus is for you to read, contextualize, order, or derive meaning from a set of arguments as they appear in the books and articles that you have identified as being critical to your thematic focus. You will want to think of historiography or the literature review in relation to knowledge production, conceptual innovation, or theoretical orientations. **This paper is due May 11, 2017.**

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:**

September 7, 8 & 9, 2021	Individual Conferences
October 5, 2021	Bibliographic Summary Due
November 9, 2021	Preliminary Draft (1-3 pages) of Framing Due
December 17, 2021	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 communities?)

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:**

Dworkin, Ira. 2017. *Congo Love Song: African American Culture and the Crisis of the Colonial State*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina.

Edwards, Brent H. 2003. *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, & the Rise of Black Internationalism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Kazanjian, David. 2016. *The Brink of Freedom: Improvising Life in the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Lindsay, Lisa A. 2019. *Atlantic Bonds: A Nineteenth-Century Odyssey from American to Africa*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Mann, Gregory. 2006. *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*.

Durham: Duke University Press.

Matory, Lorand J. 2005. *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, & Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Peele, J. D.Y. 2000. *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Piot, Charles and Kodjo Nicholas Batema. 2019. *The Fixer: Visa Lottery Chronicles*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Price, Richard. 1990. *Alabi's World*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Sanneh, Lamin. 2000. *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Sensbach, Jon. 2005. *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Sundiata, Ibrahim K. 2003. *Brothers and Strangers: Black Zion, Black Slaves (1914-1940)*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Sweet, James H. 2013. *Domingos Álvares: African Healing and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Wilder, Gary. 2005. *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonialism Between the Two World Wars*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

### **Recommended Readings:**

The list below is obviously incomplete but serves as a preliminary guide for you to navigate the vast intellectual terrain of the African diaspora.

### **Memoirs and Histories of Intellectual Formations:**

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992)

Coombes, Annie E. *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994)

Hartman, Saidiya. *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007)

Gates, Jr., Henry Louis. *Figures in Black: Words, Signs and the 'Racial' Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987)

Lewis, Gordon K. *Main Currents in Caribbean Thought: The Historical Evolution of Caribbean Society in Its Ideological Aspects, 1492-1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2004)

Meier, August and Rudwick, Elliot. *Black History and the Historical Profession: 1915-1980* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986)

Moses, Wilson Jeremiah. *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925* (New York: Oxford

- University Press, 1978)
- Mudimbe, V. Y. *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988)
- Oliver, Roland. *In the Realms of Gold: Pioneering in African History* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997)
- Vansina, Jan. *Living with Africa* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994)

### **General Works:**

- Campbell, James T. *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787-2005* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006)
- Heywood, Linda M. and Thornton, John K. *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007)
- Manning, Patrick. *The African Diaspora: A History through Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009)
- Rediker, Marcus. *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Viking, 2007).
- Thornton, John. *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Modern World, 1400-1680* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

### **Classics & Conceptual Works:**

- Apter, Andrew, *Black Critics & Kings: The Hermeneutics of Power in Yoruba Society* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992)
- , *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005)
- Barnes, Sandra T. *Africa's Ogun: Old World and New* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997)
- Bastide, Roger. *The African Religions of Brazil: Toward a Sociology of the Interpenetration of Civilizations*, translated by Helen Sebba (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University 1978)
- Baucom, Ian. *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005)
- Edwards, Brent H. *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of the Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003)
- Herskovits, Melville J. *The Myth of the Negro Past*, Introduction by Sidney W. Mintz (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990 [1941])
- Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993)
- James, C. L. R. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963)
- Matory, J. Lorand. *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005)
- Mintz, Sidney W. *The Birth of African American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992 [1976])
- Kazanjian, David. *The Colonizing Trick: National Culture and the Imperial Citizenship in Early America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003)
- Palmie, Stephan. *Wizards & Scientists: Explorations in Afro-Cuban Modernity & Tradition* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002)
- Price, Richard. *First-Time: The Historical Vision of an Afro-American People* (Baltimore: The

- Johns Hopkins, 1983)
- Robinson, Cedric J. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (New Jersey: Zed Press, 1983)
- Scott, David. *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004)
- . *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999)
- Sterling, Stuckey. *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987)
- Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995)
- Wilder, Gary. *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005)
- Williams, Eric. *Capitalism & Slavery*, Introduction by Colin A. Palmer (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1944)

### **Monographs:**

- Brown, Vincent. *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2008)
- Byrd, Alexander X. *Captives & Voyagers: Black Migrants Across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008)
- Curtin, Philip D. *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969)
- Gilroy, Paul. *'There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack': The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991 [1987])
- Guridy, Frank Andre. *Forging Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African American in a World of Empire and Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010)
- Landers, Jane G. *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010)
- Law, Robin. *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving 'Port' 1727-1892* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004)
- Miller, Joseph C. *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988)
- Morgan, Jennifer L. *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Slavery in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004)
- Price, Richard. *Alabi's World* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, 1990).
- Reis, João José. *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia*, translated by Arthur Brakel (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993)
- Rucker, Walter C. *Gold Coast Diasporas: Identity, Culture, and Power* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015)
- Smallwood, Stephanie E. *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007)
- Sweet, James H. *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003)

- August 31:                    Introductions & Course Overview  
Readings:  
Edwards, Brent Hayes. 2001. "The Uses of Diaspora." *Social Text* (Spring): 45-73.  
Foucault, Michel. 1991. "Governmentality." In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality with Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault*. Edited by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 87-104.  
Scott, David. 1995. "Colonial Governmentality," *Social Text* (Autumn): 191-220.
- September 7                    No Class: Individual Conferences September 7, 8 & 9, 2021 (These sessions will be organized around your scholarly interests, programmatic needs and identifying themes that might become the basis of your literature review.)
- September 14:                Diaspora & Colonial Studies  
Readings:  
Cooper, Frederick. 2005. *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1-55.
- September 21:                Diaspora & the Cultural Memory  
Readings:  
Price, Richard. 1990. *Alabi's World*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.  
Scott, David. 1991. "That Event, This Memory: Notes on the Anthropology of the African Diasporas In the New World." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* (Winter 1991): 261-284.
- September 28:                Diaspora & the Moral Imaginary  
Readings:  
Sensbach, Jon. 2005. *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- October 5:                    Mobility as Foundations  
Readings:  
Sweet, James H. 2011. *Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- October 12:                    Diaspora & the Question of Africa  
Readings:  
Sanneh, Lamin. 2000. *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- October 19:                    Diaspora, Freedom & the Politics of Sovereignty  
Readings:  
Kazanjian, David. 2016. *The Brink of Freedom: Improvising Life in the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World*. Durham: Duke University Press.

- October 26:                    Diaspora, the Politics of Religion & the Making of Africa  
Readings:  
Peele, J. D.Y. 2000. *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- November 2:                    Diaspora & the ‘Black’ Public Sphere  
Readings:  
Matory, Lorand J. 2005. *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, & Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- November 9:                    Movement Cultures & Self-Fashioning  
Readings:  
Lindsay, Lisa A. 2019. *Atlantic Bonds: A Nineteenth-Century Odyssey from American to Africa*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- November 16:                    Blackness & Africa  
Readings:  
Sundiata, Ibrahim K. 2003. *Brothers and Strangers: Black Zion, Black Slaves (1914-1940)*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- November 23:                    Diaspora & Colonial Formations  
Readings:  
Dworkin, Ira. 2017. *Congo Love Song: African American Culture and the Crisis of the Colonial State*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina.
- November 30:                    Nation, Texts & Black Internationalism  
Readings:  
Edwards, Brent H. 2003. *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, & the Rise of Black Internationalism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- December 7:                    Nation, Imperial Formation & Diaspora  
Readings:  
Wilder, Gary. 2005. *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonialism Between the Two World Wars*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- December 14:                    Diaspora, Military Service & The Political Imaginary  
Readings:  
Mann, Gregory. 2006. *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. Durham: Duke University Press.