

**Winter 2018**  
**Department of English/Department of History**  
**ENGL 3702/HIST 3907A: American Culture/Transnational History**  
**Precludes additional credit for ENGL 3703 (no longer offered)**  
**Tuesdays 11:25-2:25**  
***Southam Hall 518***

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**Offices:** 1814 DT

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**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 3-5

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PLEASE NOTE THAT OUR CLASSROOM WILL BE DEVICE FREE: NO LAPTOPS, E-READERS, OR CELL PHONES ALLOWED.

**Black Freedoms: African American Culture from Abolition to Black Lives Matter**

This course explores the demand for black freedom that courses through U.S. culture from the movement to abolish slavery in the mid-nineteenth century to the present day, and places this long struggle for justice and equality in a global and transnational context. Throughout, we will pay particular attention to the politics and poetics of black intellectuals, artists, and activists who have shaped the modern world by resisting forms of racial hierarchy and violence. We will use a range of media--including photographs, video, music, film, and literature--to explore these topics: the marketing and reading of slave narratives; anti-lynching crusades and the visual archive of mob violence; contested memories of the transatlantic slave trade and imperialism; the relationship between anti-colonialism, surrealism and existentialism; Black Consciousness Movements and Afrofuturism; the place of sex, love, and desire in discourses of liberation; and current struggles against mass incarceration and police brutality.

**Reading, Viewing, Listening**

These books will be available from *Haven Books*, and on reserve at the library:

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells: 1892-1900*

Toni Morrison, *Sula*

Angela Davis, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement*

All other texts for the course will be posted to Culearn and/or on reserve at the library. On the syllabus we have marked films and videos with \*, music with \*\*, and photographs with \*\*\*.

**Assignments and Evaluation:** Your final grade will be based on brief writing assignments (30%); take-home exam (20%); a social media assignment (30%); and class participation and attendance (20%).

*Brief Writing Assignments* (30%)

You will be asked to write three short (2 page) papers over the course of the semester that respond to the texts we are dealing with in a given week. These papers should:

- Entice the indifferent or hostile reader into the themes and issues under review (i.e. explain why the topics covered by the texts are important to people who do not specialize in Black Freedoms)

- Advance critical inquiry by encouraging, provoking or vexing the reader interested in Black Freedoms into some fresh thinking
- Place two texts from one week in dialogue with one another. How do they speak differently to a common issue? What difference does the medium make to how each text communicates its meanings?

#### *Take Home Exam (20%)*

You will write a take-home exam during reading week that asks you to discuss key concepts and texts from the course to date.

#### *Social Media Assignment (30%)*

This assignment will allow you to pursue your own interest in black freedoms by bringing relevant texts from outside our course to bear on our work together this term. You will have the opportunity to create a podcast or audiovisual work that engages with the themes and issues of the course, due at the end of the semester. More detailed instructions about this assignment will be posted on culearn.

#### *Class Participation and Attendance*

All students are expected to contribute actively to in-class discussion by reading the required material and engaging the topics in class. Absences from class will have a significant negative impact on your participation mark, and these will not be excused except for absolutely exceptional circumstances, and medical documentation is strongly encouraged (if applicable).

Your participation mark will be largely based on the quality of your contribution to the discussion (not necessarily the quantity). Contribution can take a variety of forms, including asking questions for clarification, making connections between the assigned readings for the week and previous readings, and providing a critical analysis of the readings. The first step to achieving a strong participation grade is to be sure to read the required material before the discussion session.

Contributing to the seminar group is not limited to in-class discussion. Students also have the opportunity to pose questions, comments and discussion points on culearn. You may contribute comments before and after the class to the culearn discussion group. These comments may be brief. For example, you may post a link to a site or advert that relates to the readings and helps illustrate a point or deepen our analysis. Or you may develop a tweet or short video that might help disseminate the points raised in the readings or class discussion. More substantial comments or reflections, which place the readings in historical or geographical context, are also encouraged.

#### **Policies:**

##### *Device Free Classroom*

Please note that our classroom will be device-free: no laptops; no cell phones; no e-readers. Each week two students will volunteer to take notes (on laptops) for the entire group. (They will receive extra credit for taking careful and accurate notes.) These notes will be posted on CU Learn. Otherwise, the only students allowed to use laptops in the classroom will be those with special permission from the Paul Menton Centre. Likewise, students will not be allowed to use cell phones or other devices for any purpose during class.

##### *Request for Academic Accommodation*

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

### *Pregnancy obligation*

Write to the course instructors with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#).

### *Religious obligation*

Write to the course instructors with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#).

### *Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities*

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the [PMC website](#) for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

### *Plagiarism*

Academic honesty is considered the ground rule of any university level course. Plagiarism is defined in the “Instructional Offences” section of the *Carleton Undergraduate Calendar* as “using and passing off as one’s own ideas the work of someone else” without giving proper credit and documentation or submitting the same assignment in more than one class. This means using someone else’s ideas in any format, printed or online (whether from a scholarly essay, a student essay, a website, or even just a blog commentary). If you find yourself tempted to use someone else’s ideas or words because of stress, illness, anxiety about your own ability, personal crisis, time crisis, or any other issues, I urge you to let me know about these circumstances, so that we can work together to make sure you do work of the highest integrity. The penalties for plagiarism are severe, ranging from a disciplinary meeting with the Associate Dean of the faculty, failure on the assignment, failure in the course, and/or suspension from the university. If I suspect that an essay or portion of an essay has been plagiarized, I am required to submit the essay to the Associate Dean of the Faculty with documentation.

## **SCHEDULE**

January 9 **Introduction to the course**

January 16 **Independence and Equality**

Phyllis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America" (1773)

Thomas Jefferson, "The Declaration of Independence" (1776) and excerpts from "Notes on the State of Virginia" (1787)

David Walker, excerpts from "Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World (1829)

\*\*Lin Manuel Miranda, "Cabinet Battle #1 and #2" (2014)

January 23 **Narrating Emancipation**

[The Haitian Declaration of Independence](#) (1804)

Frederick Douglass, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" (1845)  
Abraham Lincoln, "Emancipation Proclamation" (1863), "To Albert Hodges" (1864), "Second Inaugural Address" (1865)

\*\*Anonymous, "John Brown's Body" (1961)

\*\*Julia Ward Howe, "Battle Hymn of the Republic" (1862)

### January 30 **'Crusades for Justice': Race Women and Intellectual Thought**

Ida B Wells, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016).

Michelle Duster, *Ida from Abroad* (Chicago: Northwestern University, 2010), 53-96.

### February 6 **Omni-American Art**

W.E.B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk* (1903), 3-75.

[George Schuyler, 'Negro Art-Hokum' \(1926\).](#)

[Langston Hughes, 'The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain' \(1929\).](#)

\**Looking for Langston* (dir. Isaac Julien, 1989).

### February 13 **Love and Family: Early Civil Rights**

Brown vs. Board of Education (1954)

James Baldwin, "Notes of a Native Son" (1955)

Langston Hughes, "Mother to Son" (1922), "Weary Blues," (1932), "Song for a Dark Girl" (1927), "Silhouette" (1949)

### February 20 Reading Week

### February 27 **Marching On**

Martin Luther King, Selected Speeches

\*\*\*Benedict Fernandez, "From Here To Eternity," selected photographs

\*Ava DuVernay, "Selma" (2014)

## **TAKE HOME EXAM DUE IN CLASS**

### March 6 **Decolonizing Minds**

Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 1-67.

Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like* (Chapter 5, 'Black Souls in White Skins'; 6, 'We Blacks'; 9, 'The Definition of Black Consciousness'; 11, 'White Racism and Black Consciousness'; 14, 'Black Consciousness and the Quest for a true Humanity'; 15, 'What is Black Consciousness?')

\*\*Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On?* (1971)

\*\*Bob Marley and the Wailers, *Burnin'* (1973)

\*\*Gil Scott Heron, *It's Your World* (1976)

### March 13 **Freedom Embodied**

Toni Morrison, *Sula* (1973)

### March 20 **The Resistance: Hip Hop and Black cultural politics**

\*\*Public Enemy, *Fear of a Black Planet* (1990).

Armond White, *The Resistance* (New York: Overlook Press, 1995), xii-xvii, 1-16, 74-79, 109-113, 123-127, 213-216, 236-243, 319-328, 421-443.

Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (2003), 9-39, 105-115.

Richard Iton, 'Let them only see us,' *In Search of the Black Fantastic* (2008). Chapter 4.

### March 27 **Transatlantic Exchange**

Barack Obama, 'A More Perfect Union,' March 18, 2008.

Armond White, 'The Pursuit of Crappyness,' *New York Press*, July 9, 2008.

Armond White, 'Dud of the Week,' *City Arts*, October 16, 2013. Paul Gilroy, "12 Years a Slave: in our 'post-racial' age the legacy of slavery lives on," *The Observer*, November 10, 2013.

"A Dialogue on the Human: An Interview with Paul Gilroy," in *Retrieving the Human: Reading Paul Gilroy*, eds. Rebecka Rutledge Fisher and Jay Garcia (New York: SUNY Press, 2014), 207-226.

George Yancy and Paul Gilroy, 'What 'Black Lives' Means in Britain,' *New York Times*, October 1, 2015.

Rosemary Bechler and Paul Gilroy, "Paul Gilroy in search of a not necessarily safe starting point....," *Open Democracy*, May 1 2016.

'Who are the Slaves Now?' *Under the Skin with Russell Brand and Paul Gilroy* (2017)

### April 3 **Freedom Then, and Freedom Now**

\*Raoul Peck, "I Am Not Your Negro" (2016)

Teju Cole, "Black Body," "Natives on the Boat"

### April 10 **Freedom is a Constant Struggle**

Angela Davis, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (2016)