

Carleton University
FALL 2026
Institute for Comparative Studies in Literature, Art and Culture
ENGL 5004W/CLMD 6102W/ARTH 5112F/MGDS 5002D
BLACK EUROPE

Thursdays 2:35-5:25
Location: 201D St. Patrick's Building
Format: In-person

Instructor: Prof. Sarah Phillips Casteel
Email: sarah.casteel@carleton.ca

Office hours: Thursdays 1-2 pm and by appointment



"When it comes to unearthing Black history, information lies between the gaps. Thus, we are dealing with a form of nothingness, the feeling of being in Europe but not of it."

Natasha A. Kelly and Olive Vassell, Introduction to *Mapping Black Europe* (2023)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This seminar explores “Black Europe” as a historical phenomenon, a theoretical framework, and a set of artistic practices. Focusing primarily on France, Germany, and Britain from the 19th century to the present, we will engage with a series of creative and critical works that foreground Europe’s historical and contemporary entanglements with Africa and its diasporas. These works illuminate Black peoples’ profound impact on European culture even as they simultaneously reveal the dynamics of exclusion that have shaped their relationship to European societies over time.

Challenging an understanding of Europe as a bounded, racially homogenous space, the seminar reframes European history and culture through Black intellectual and artistic perspectives. Together, we will read, look at, and listen to works by Black European writers, activists, visual artists, musicians, and performers. The interdisciplinary, or “undisciplined,” design of this course is critical to its excavation of Black European cultural histories that have been occluded by more conventional frameworks. Reading across different media will help to expose the “bundles of silences” (Trouillot) surrounding the contributions of Black artists—especially Black women artists—to European literature, art, and music.

READINGS:

Please purchase the following books (available from the CU Bookstore; both books are also on physical reserve at the CU Library). Physical copies are preferred:

- Johny Pitts, *Afropean: Notes from Black Europe* (Penguin, 2019) 978-0-141-987286
- Sam Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners* (Penguin, 2006 [1956]) 978-0-141-18841-6

Shorter texts will be made available electronically on Brightspace.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [Black Central Europe](#) website
- [Afropean](#) website
- [Afropea](#) French language website
- [InBEST: Intersectional Black European Studies](#) (digital archive under development)
- *Black Perspectives* [series on Black Europe](#) (African American Intellectual History Society)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING SCHEME:

15%	attendance and participation • consistent attendance, active involvement in class discussion, and informed comments about issues raised by the readings that help to advance the discussion • this seminar is held in-person and cannot be followed virtually • no penalty for absences due to illness, bereavement, or religious observance
10%	weekly responses to the assigned readings (1 paragraph) • due by midnight the night before the class in question • responses should be brief but thoughtful and can address any or all of the readings • no summaries please! instead, raise questions about the readings or identify a passage or motif that you found particularly striking, intriguing, or troubling and that you would like to discuss further in class; please come to class prepared to talk about your response • *you do not need to submit a response the week you are serving as discussion leader • *see the rubric posted in Brightspace for assessment criteria • *do not use generative AI to compose your weekly response
5%	decolonial guidebook group presentation (5 minutes + 2 minute audio clip) • introduce <u>a key site</u> in one of the European cities featured in the <i>Afropean</i> podcast and corresponding book chapter (cities will be assigned to you in pairs) ○ choose a specific site in your city (ideally one that Pitts mentions) and research its significance for Black Europe ○ create two slides to show during your presentation: one containing an image of the site and the other outlining key points regarding its significance ○ send both slides to me as a PDF by 9 pm on the day preceeding the class so that I can compile them for display ○ select a short (c. 2 minute) clip from your city's podcast episode to play for the class and explain why you chose it ○ *I will hold you strictly to the allotted time
20%	discussion leader • provide a 15-minute overview of one or more of the assigned readings that identifies their most salient points • do not simply summarize the readings; instead offer <u>an interpretation and argument</u> • pose 3-4 questions to the class and lead a discussion of the readings
20%	conference-paper style presentation • a preliminary version of your final paper (see below) that will allow you to test your ideas and receive some feedback from your fellow students • <u>length</u>: 3 double-spaced pages; length of oral version tbc • <u>paper titles and 1-paragraph abstract</u>: due on November 19 • once I have received the abstracts, I will organize the conference papers into panels to be held during class on December 3 • upload to Brightspace the written text of your conference paper by 10 am on the day of the mini-conference and please bring a hard copy to class

30%	final paper - the final paper is an opportunity to explore the idea of Black Europe in the context of the particular genres, media, cultural histories and disciplinary perspectives that drive your own research interests - final papers should go substantially beyond the conference paper version, not only adding length but also incorporating feedback received during the mini-conference and from me - please feel free to discuss potential paper topics and approaches with me at any point during the term <u>length and format</u>: 12 pages, 12-point font, double-spaced (not including Works Cited and endnotes) <u>due date</u>: December 11; late papers penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per day late including weekends (i.e. from B+ to B, etc.); extensions will be granted only in cases of serious illness (with doctor's note), bereavement, or religious observance *please consult the checklist of expectations for graduate level essays posted in Brightspace *the use of generative AI is not permitted for this or any course assignment
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SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Sept. 10: INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS BLACK EUROPE?

Sept. 17: THEORIZING BLACK EUROPE

- Read:**
 - Olivette Otele, "Introduction," *African Europeans: An Untold History* (Basic Books, 2020).
 - Stephen Small, "Introduction: The Empire Strikes Back." In Darlen Clark Hine, Tricia Danielle Keaton, and Stephen Small eds., *Black Europe and the African Diaspora* (University of Illinois Press, 2009).
 - Natasha A. Kelly and Olive Vassell, "Black Europe: Contesting, Conceptualizing, and Organizing." In Kelly and Vassell Eds., [*Mapping Black Europe: Monuments, Markers, Memories*](#) (Transcript, 2023).
 - Fatima El-Tayeb, "Undisciplined Knowledge: Intersectional Black European Studies." *New German Critique* 50. 3 (2023): 37–49.

- Cristina Roldão, Raquel Lima, Pedro Varela, Otávio Raposo and Ana Raquel Matias, "Introduction." In Roldão et. al. eds., *AfroEuropeans: Identities, Racism, and Resistances* (Routledge, 2025).

Sept. 24: BLACK EUROPEAN TRAVEL WRITING I + DECOLONIAL GUIDEBOOK PRESENTATIONS

- **Read:**
 - selections from Johnny Pitts, *Afropean: Notes from Black Europe* (Penguin, 2019):
 - "Introduction" (1-10); "Prologue" (11-30); "Paris" (33-81); "An Afropean Odyssey" (373-380)
 - + read the chapter that addresses the city you will be presenting (Paris, Lisbon, Stockholm, Berlin, Amsterdam, or Brussels)
- **Listen to:**
 - the episode devoted to your city of [The Afropean Podcast](#) hosted by Johnny Pitts
 - [the Afropean soundtrack](#) (optional)
- **Look at (in class):**
 - Johnny Pitts, [Afropean: A Journal](#) (2025)
 - Dienne Hondius et. al., [Amsterdam Slavery Heritage Guide](#) (LM Publishers, 2014)

Oct. 1: BLACK EUROPEAN TRAVEL WRITING II

- **Read:**
 - James Baldwin, Part III of *Notes of a Native Son* [1955]. Reprinted in the *Collected Essays* (The Library of America, 1998), 85-129.
 - Caryl Phillips, "Dinner at Jimmy's" and "Autumn in Paris." In *The European Tribe* (Faber & Faber, 1987), 39-44; 56-65.
 - Teju Cole, "Black Body." In *Known and Strange Things* (Random House, 2016), 3-16.
 - Johnny Pitts, "James Baldwin's Saint-Paul-de-Vence." In *Afropean* (298-305).
- **Look at (in class):**
 - [Paris Noir](#) (2025 exhibition, Centre Pompidou)
 - Teju Cole, *Fernweh* (2020)

Oct. 8: BLACK MUSES IN EUROPEAN ART: CURATORIAL AND ARTISTIC INTERVENTIONS

- **Read:**
 - Esi Edugyan, “Europe and the Art of Seeing.” In *Out of the Sun: On Race and Storytelling* (Anansi, 2021), 5-42.
 - Brown, M.R. “Miss La La’s” Teeth: Reflections on Degas and “Race.” *The Art Bulletin*, 89.4 (2007), 738–765 [*read up to page 754 only].
 - Natasha A. Kelly, Introduction to *Millis Erwachsen: Schwarze Frauen, Kunst und Widerstand/Milli’s Awakening: Black Women, Art and Resistance* (Orlanda, 2018), 7-15.
 - Joslyn Gardner, “Maud Sulter’s Image-Making: The Rising of Jeanne Duval’s Ka.” *Callaloo* 43.1 (2025): 109–22.
 - Maud Sulter, “Maud Sulter on Negotiating the Muse” and “Maud Sulter on Jeanne Duval.” In *Jeanne Duval: A Melodrama* (National Galleries of Scotland, 2003), 13-15; 21-24.
 - Maud Sulter, “Historical Objects.” *Zabat: Poetics of a Family Tree: Poems 1986-1989* (Urban Fox Press, 1989), 68-69.
 - Charles Baudelaire, “Hair [La Chevelure]” (1861). From *The Flowers of Evil*, translated by William Aggeler (Academy Library Guild, 1954).
- **Look at (in class—and at home if you wish):**
 - [Black Models from Gericault to Matisse](#) (2019 exhibition, Musée d’Orsay)
 - [Discover Degas & Miss Lala](#) (2024 exhibition, National Gallery, London)
 - David Martin, [Dido Elizabeth Belle and Lady Elizabeth Murray](#) (1778)
 - Felix Nadar, [photograph of Jeanne Duval](#) (1862)
 - Edouard Manet, [La maîtresse de Baudelaire \(Jeanne Duval\)](#) (1862)
 - Edward Degas, [Miss Lala at the Fernando Circus](#) (1879)
 - Ernst Kirchner, [Sleeping Milli](#) (1911)
 - Maud Sulter, [Duval et Dumas](#), from *Syrkas* (1993)
 - Maud Sulter, [La Chevelure](#) (2002)

Oct. 15: MUSIC AND PERFORMANCE

- **Read:**
 - Kira Thurman, “Introduction.” *Singing Like Germans: Black Musicians in the Land of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms* (Cornell UP, 2021), 1-17.
 - Jeff Bowersox, “Seeing Black: Foote’s Afro-American Company and the Performance of Racial Uplift in Imperial Germany in 1891.” *German History* 38.3 (2020): 387-413.
 - Vanessa Toulmin, “Black Circus Performers in Victorian Britain.” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 16.3 (2018): 267–289.

- Rachel Gillett, "Introduction: Setting Up." *At Home in Our Sounds: Music, Race, and Cultural Politics in Interwar Paris* (Oxford University Press, 2021), 1-30.
- **Listen to (in class):**
 - [Black Europe: The Sounds and Images of Black People in Europe—Pre-1927](#) (Bear Family Records 2015, available through the Carleton Library)
 - recordings of performers such as Josephine Baker, Valaida Snow, Arthur Briggs...
- **Look at (in class):**
 - [Hearing Ghosts: The Life and Times of Josephine Morcashani](#) (13 minutes)
 - August Sander, [Traveling People – Fair and Circus, from People of the Twentieth Century](#) (1926-32)
 - [Mapping African American Entertainers Before the Jazz Age](#) (blackcentraleurope.com)
 - [Forgotten Cosmopolitanisms](#) project

Oct. 22: BLACK WARTIME MEMORY

- **Read:**
 - Léopold Sédar Senghor, "To the Senegalese Soldiers Who Died for France" and "Camp 1940." From *Black Hosts* [1948]. In *The Collected Poetry*, translated by Melvin Dixon (University Press of Virginia, 1991), 46-47; 54.
 - excerpts from the following memoirs:
 - Theodor Michael, *Black German: An Afro-German Life in the Twentieth Century*. Translated by Eve Rosenhaft (Liverpool University Press, 2017).
 - Hans J. Massaquoi, *Destined to Witness: Growing Up Black in Nazi Germany* (HarperPerennial, 1999).
 - Martha Stark, "My 13 Years Under the Nazi Terror" [1949]. Reprinted in *Remapping Black Germany: New Perspectives on Afro-German History, Politics, and Culture*. Ed. Sara Lennox (University of Massachusetts Press, 2016), 171-202.
 - Sarah Phillips Casteel, "Making History Visible: Dutch Caribbean Artist Josef Nassy's Visual Diary of Nazi Internment." *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 64 (March 2021): 28-46.
- **Look at (in class):**
 - [interview with Theodor Wonja Michael](#) (Schwarzrotgold tv; 10:45 min.)
 - works from [The Josef Nassy Collection](#) (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

Oct. 29: READING WEEK

Nov. 5: GUEST SPEAKER PROF. FELIX ANYABODE, DEPT. OF MODERN LANGUAGES, KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY + CUAG VISIT (4:30-5:25)

- **Read:**
 - tbc
- **Look at:**
 - *Faisa Omer: Threading Roots*, exhibition of Somali Canadian photographer at the Carleton University Art Gallery

Nov. 12: WINDRUSH LITERATURE

- **Read:**
 - Louise Bennett, "[Colonisation in Reverse](#)" (1966)
 - Sam Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners* (1956)
- **Listen to (in class):**
 - Lord Kitchener performing "[London is the Place for Me](#)" (1948)
 - Louise Bennett (Ma Lou) performing "[Colonisation in Reverse](#)" (1966)
- **Look at (in class):**
 - [Remembering Windrush](#) (The National Archives, UK, 2023, 6:45 min.)
 - [Lord Kitchener: The King of Calypso](#) (Museum of London Docklands, 2020, 1:30 min.)
 - ["The UK Scandal That Betrayed Its Own"](#) (BBC, 2021, 15 min.)
 - Clip from Steve McQueen dir., *Mangrove*, episode from the anthology television series *Small Axe* (2020, 2h 7m, available on Amazon Prime Video)

Nov. 19: BLACK EUROPEAN FILM WITH GUEST SPEAKER PROF. MALINI GUHA, FILM STUDIES, CARLETON UNIVERSITY

- **Read:**
 - tbc
- **Look at (in class):**
 - John Akomfrah, *Handsworth Songs*

Nov. 26: BLACK GERMAN WOMEN'S ACTIVISM, POETICS, AND CHOREOGRAPHY

- **Read:**
 - Tiffany Florvil, "Introduction: A 'Black Coming Out.'" *Mobilizing Black Germany: Afro-German Women and the Making of a Transnational Movement* (University of Illinois Press, 2020), 1-24.
 - Foreword, Preface and Introduction. *Showing Our Colours: Afro-German Women Speak Out*, ed. May Opitz, Katharine Oguntoye and Dagmar Schultz. Translated by Anne V. Adams (University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), vii-xxv.
 - May Ayim, "blues in black and white," "afro-german I," "afro-german II," "A Letter from Muenster," "borderless and brazen." *Blues in Black and White*, translated by Anne V. Adams (Africa World Press, 2003), 4-21; 48-49.
 - Layla Zami, "Dancing After Life: Flexible Spacetimes of Black Female ResistDance." *Dance Research Journal* 53.2 (2021): 67–87.
- **Look at (in class):**
 - Oxana Chi and Layla Zami, "[i step on air](#)" (choreographed by Oxana Chi, 28:18 min.)

Dec. 3: MINI-CONFERENCE

- Oral presentations of preliminary versions of final papers.

Dec. 10 [week 13]: individual paper consultations

- No formal class meeting. I will be available to consult about your final papers.

COURSE POLICIES

Sensitivity of Class Materials

Given the topic of this course, we will frequently confront difficult and sensitive materials. Much of the material we read and view will be emotionally and intellectually challenging. I will do my best to make the classroom a space where we can engage bravely, empathetically, and thoughtfully with difficult content.

Inclusivity

I am committed to fostering an environment for learning that is inclusive for everyone regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression,

ability, age, and class. All students in the course, the instructor, and any guests should be treated with respect during all interactions. Please feel free to contact me if you have any concerns. I also welcome emails or other communication to let me know your preferred name or pronoun.

Student Wellbeing

The COVID-19 pandemic and other recent events have made the past several years extraordinarily stressful and challenging for many students. While encouraging rigorous academic work in this class, I am mindful of your health and wellbeing and the need to balance academic commitments with other responsibilities. Please feel free to contact me if you are encountering difficult circumstances, feeling overwhelmed by class assignments, or if you would like help connecting with academic support or health resources.

COURSE POLICY ON THE USE OF AI

The use of generative AI is prohibited in this course. Why? Because studying culture is fundamentally about human-to-human communication. It is about learning to read, think, and write critically, creatively, and independently. Thinking and writing is about *process*, but generative AI cuts out process. It makes your work bland, vague, and often simply wrong.

Generative AI is not a reliable source of information. Most generative AIs are trained based on internet data that often is inaccurate and contains implicit biases. The many ethical problems with AI include its reliance on stolen property and its significant environmental costs. Especially relevant and problematic for the subject matter of our class are the racial biases that it embeds and perpetuates.

My promise to you is that I will not use AI to prepare for our seminar discussions, to produce feedback on your assignments, or grades. In exchange, by submitting work in this class, you are agreeing that you are the author, not any third party (including AI). Students suspected of using AI in their work in a manner that violates this policy may be asked to provide me with their research notes and drafts of their essay. They may also be asked to meet with me to discuss the assignment and the research materials consulted. Suspected cases of academic integrity violation will be reported to the Dean's office.

KEY DATES FALL 2026

September 9	Fall term begins.
September 22	Last day for registration and course changes (including auditing) in fall and fall/winter courses.
September 30	Last day to withdraw from fall and fall/winter courses with a full fee adjustment (financial withdrawal).
October 26-30	Fall break, no classes.

November 15	Last day for academic withdrawal from fall courses.
December 11	Fall term ends. Last day of fall and fall/winter classes. Classes follow a Monday schedule.
December 12-23	Final examinations in fall courses and midterm examinations in fall/winter courses will be held.

PLAGIARISM: The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT).
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment.
- using another’s data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement.
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one’s own; and
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course.

MENTAL HEALTH: As a student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION: Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website (students.carleton.ca/course-outline).