

HIST 535\_DL1:

## THE BLACK ATLANTIC WORLD

M | 7:20-10pm | Online

Dr. Christy Pichichero  
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George Mason University  
Spring 2024



### CONTACT INFORMATION

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<b>OFFICE</b>	Horizon Hall 5129	<b>OFFICE HOURS</b>	Mon 3pm & by appt (via Zoom)

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

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What is the “Black Atlantic” and how does it constitute a unique world within the context of global history? This class investigates the Black Atlantic as a theoretical construct and as a living political, economic, and socio-cultural space produced by the evolving relationship between Africa, Europe, and the Americas from the fifteenth century to today. We will study the experience of capture and enslavement in Africa, the Middle Passage, systems of enslaved labor, maroon communities, Afro-Indigenous relations, individual and collective battles for emancipation, colonialism and independence movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and representations, conflicts, and solidarities on our era of the global Black Lives Matter movement. In our explorations, we will engage a diversity of disciplinary perspectives—Black Geographies, History, Cultural Studies, Philosophy, Economics, Literature, Anthropology—and a variety of historical and contemporary sources, from freedom trials of enslaved people, political correspondence, and philosophical treatises to postcolonial feminism, poetry, music, and film. We will bring a prismatic lens to examining the Black Atlantic through questions of race, gender, religion, sexuality, economic status, citizenship, migration (forced and voluntary), and diaspora while focusing on Black voices, experiences, and emancipation.

This course will be run as a seminar. I will provide background information or explanations when appropriate, but the bulk of our class sessions will be devoted to critical discussions of assigned readings. Your engagement with ideas presented in classes and readings, and your ability to apply them,

will be assessed based on your participation in class discussion, think papers and responses on the Blackboard discussion forum, and a final research project (oral presentation and research paper).

### REQUIRED TEXTS

In an effort to control costs for students, nearly all sources for the seminar are available online for free through the university library system. Additional materials will be available for students to access through BlackBoard. Students may decide in what format they wish to acquire and read relevant sources.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

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By the end of this course, students will have gained the following experiences, skills, knowledge, and practice:

- + Students will develop familiarity with theories and methodologies of scholarship on the Black Atlantic from a multiplicity of disciplinary perspectives.
- + Students will grow comparative skills connecting core concepts, methodologies, primary sources, and historiographies of the Black Atlantic across multiple chronological and geographic contexts.
- + Students will learn to communicate effectively about and engage in research in conversation with emerging scholarship on the Black Atlantic.
- + Students will understand the philosophical, socio-political, economic, spiritual, and artistic stakes of Black Atlantic projects, from exploitation to liberation, centering Black voices and experiences.

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

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Students must complete all graded assignments and other requirements listed on the syllabus.

### THINK PAPERS

Our course will be centered on critical readings and an online discussion board. In weeks 2-13, 2-3 students will post a 500-600 word (around 1-page, single-spaced) response paper that I refer to as a **"think paper."** Think papers must be posted **before 12 noon each Sunday**. All other students will read these think papers and respond to 1 (one) of them with a substantive, readings-based answer that may agree, disagree, nuance, offer additional examples of what is being written about, or add their own related questions. Responses to think papers should be 1-2 paragraph(s), should engage closely with the week's readings, and posted online **before 12 noon each Monday**. Between Week 2 and Week 13, each student will have posted 2 "think papers" and 10 responses to the "think papers" posted by others. A sign-up sheet will be circulated on the first day of class.

**What is a "think paper"?** A think paper is not: a summary of the reading, a formal research paper, an argumentative essay, a stream of consciousness narrative, or a disorganized brainstorm. A think paper is a brief exposition of your critical reflections on issues, themes, and methods that emerge from the readings. Your think paper should focus on one or two main themes, issues, or questions that you find striking, important, or problematic in the reading. This short form of writing demonstrates structure through using proper grammar and strong topic sentences at the head of each paragraph. You should have an introductory sentence that announces what you'll be thinking about (examples: "In this think paper, I am considering how author X portrays Y and Z and how this ..." "This think paper addresses 2 of author A's arguments regarding cross-cultural military alliances and their implications for... The first argument on pp.34-37 advances the notion that..."). Think papers should include multiple textual references and/or quotations from the text to support your ideas.

Great think papers demonstrate strong critical thinking about and readings of the text(s), engage with and analyze specific claims and/or quotes, pose questions, and look at issues or problems that will create lively discussion or debate and help us to better understand what is going on in the text(s). Great responses to think papers show these same characteristics, though they are not as lengthy and need not worry about issues of structure since they are only 1-2 paragraph(s) long. Your think papers and responses to those written by others constitute more than ½ of your final grade.

**CLASS PARTICIPATION**

This class is highly collaborative and participatory; regular attendance and participation are of crucial importance. Every class, you will be responsible for:

- ✓ Completing all written assignments so as to be prepared for class
- ✓ Identifying & thinking through the key topic, ideas, and arguments from the reading and the online discussion forum
- ✓ Actively working to contribute thoughtful questions or specific issues for the class to discuss
- ✓ Being prepared to make an argument and present your ideas as well as work collaboratively
- ✓ Demonstrating your engagement with the ideas presented by your classmates

Please see the participation grade rubric for a detailed list of expectations.

**FINAL PROJECT**

The standard final project for this course is a 5,000 to 7,500-word (references and notes included) research paper that draws on course readings as well as additional independent research to address an issue, object, concept, problem, method, theory, or practice having to do with the Black Atlantic. You will submit a brief paper proposal (250 words) and a preliminary bibliography on Blackboard by Wednesday, April 17<sup>th</sup> by 12 noon. During the last 2 class sessions, each student will give a 10-minute oral presentation with a slideshow (PowerPoint, etc.) on their work-in-progress. Final papers must be submitted on Blackboard by 12 noon on Monday, May 6, 2024.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Our class may elect to create a bibliography for collective use in a Googledoc accessible via Blackboard.

DUE DATES AND DISTRIBUTION		GRADING SCALE			
– Class participation	15%	<b>A–</b>	90–93	<b>A</b>	94–96 <b>A+</b> 97–100
– Think papers (2)	30%	<b>B–</b>	80–83	<b>B</b>	84–86 <b>B+</b> 87–89
– Think paper responses (10)	30%	<b>C–</b>	70–73	<b>C</b>	74–76 <b>C+</b> 77–79
– Final research presentation & paper	25%	<b>F</b>	>64	<b>D</b>	64–66 <b>D+</b> 67–69

# COURSE POLICIES

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## ATTENDANCE AND TARDINESS

Class attendance is not only expected, but necessary in order to be successful in this class. *Students must attend every class meeting and must contact the instructor to make arrangements for missing any portion of a class meeting.* For each absence, the participation grade will be lowered by 10 points, which may result in a failing participation grade. Tardiness to class is unacceptable as it is disruptive for the professor and fellow students. Students should log into zoom at least 5 minutes before the start of class to be sure that their connection and technology are functioning properly. Students arriving more than 5 minutes late will be marked as tardy. Three tardies equates to an absence and thus a 10-point reduction in the participation grade.

## TECHNOLOGY POLICY IN CLASS

Our course takes place online. Students must have access to both a screen and a means of typing in order to participate in class activities. A computer is most preferable for the types of work we will pursue. Students are expected to keep their cameras on during class. Browsing other websites, sending texts or DMs to other people, or engaging in any other distracting activities during class time are forbidden. These distractions will severely compromise your learning as well as the learning environment for other students. Please see me with any concerns.

## TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS

You are expected to complete all assignments on the assigned due date. Students are expected to ensure that their think papers and responses have been properly posted on the appropriate discussion forum in Blackboard. If there is any trouble with the Blackboard interface, students must email their work to me by the due date and time. If you are having difficulties completing an assignment, or are having trouble in the class, I strongly urge you to contact me as soon as possible. I am here to help you find a solution and to support your success.

## DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Pursuing advanced study is a challenging and rewarding opportunity for outstanding growth and productivity in academic, professional, and personal domains. An open, inclusive environment in the classroom is key to our collective success and is a value that the university and I hold dear. I hold myself and each student responsible for fostering a productive learning environment that supports and encourages diversity and inclusiveness. Diversity can be broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected. I believe that by fostering a willingness to hear and learn from a variety of sources and viewpoints, each of us will gain competence in communication, critical thinking and global understanding, and awareness of our biases and how they affect our interactions with others and the world. This will make us better scholars, better citizens, and better people.

## ACCESSIBILITY & ACADEMIC SUPPORT

My goal is to make this class accessible to all students as best I can within the context of the university. Please contact me if you find any reading materials, class assignments, course schedules, or activities are inaccessible to your needs relating to physical or cognitive disabilities, illness, injury, impairments, or

any other condition or life experience that negatively impacts your equal access to education. I want to collaborate with you so that you are able to access the space, content, and experience of this course. Also, if you are a caregiver and need to bring someone else to class, please contact me so that we can arrange for them to be present in the best circumstances possible. Finally, if you experience food or housing insecurity, please do not hesitate to reach out so that I can help you find resources. Ultimately, know that I am here to work with you to make this learning experience as accessible and equitable as possible. If you are experiencing a difficulty that may affect your experience in this class, please contact the Office of Disability Services (<http://ods.gmu.edu/> or 993-1274) to determine appropriate accommodations and make an appointment with me to discuss how I can support you most effectively.

**Other Academic Resources:** [http://cte.gmu.edu/Working\\_with\\_students/student\\_resources.html](http://cte.gmu.edu/Working_with_students/student_resources.html)

## **EMAIL & BLACKBOARD**

It is critically important to check Blackboard and your university e-mail accounts regularly. Our discussion forum takes place on Blackboard and although all homework assignments are listed in this syllabus, reminders and updates will be sent via e-mail and Blackboard postings. With regard to email practices, I encourage you to email me with simple questions requiring short answers and to sign up for office hours for longer questions requiring more elaborate answers. When contacting me via e-mail please realize that: 1) I do not check e-mail every hour; 2) I rarely check it after 6:00pm or on weekends; and 3) it may take me up to 24 hours to respond to your message. Please be patient. Additionally, like most university faculty, I treat e-mail in this context as a relatively formal means of communication. Your e-mails should be written with a basic greeting (i.e. *Dear, Hello, Hi*, then my name), body, and salutation (i.e. *Thank you, Sincerely, best*, then your name). Proper grammar is expected.

*Note: I do not discuss grades over email. You must make an appointment to meet and discuss any grades.*

## **HONOR CODE AND PLAGIARISM:**

Academic honesty is the pillar of all scholarly inquiry and discussion. *The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an [Honor Code](#) with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification.* Plagiarism, which can be intentional or unintentional, means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person/entity without giving the person/entity credit. Writers must give credit to sources through accepted documentation styles, such as quotation marks with parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited; a simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. *No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct* There is a NO TOLERANCE policy for any form of cheating or plagiarism in this course. Students in this course are expected to follow the provisions of the GMU Honor Code for all work submitted for a grade and the professor may utilize plagiarism detection tools (such as "Turn it in" software) in order to assure student adherence to the Honor Code. Any student cheating, aiding in cheating, or plagiarizing will automatically receive a failing grade for the assignment, and may be subject to further disciplinary action, such as failing the course or even suspension from the university.

For further information please refer to this website:  
<http://www2.gmu.edu/academics/catalog/9798/honorcod.html>.

## **ADD/DROP DATES IN SPRING 2024**

Last day to add: January 23rd; Last day to drop: January 30th (100% tuition refund); February 6th (50% tuition refund); Unrestricted Withdrawal: February 7th–February 20th (100% tuition liability); Selective Withdrawal Period (for undergraduates only): February 21st–March 25th (100% tuition liability)

# COURSE SCHEDULE

## UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE BLACK ATLANTIC

### Week 1 (1/22) – Introduction to the Course

- Aretha Phiri, "Reframing the Black Atlantic," *Cultural Studies* 37, no. 2 (2023): 191-203.

### Week 2 (1/29) – Black Geography

- Camila Hawthorne and Jovan Scott Lewis, eds., *The Black Geographic: Praxis, Resistance, Futurity* (Duke, 2023)
  - Introduction: Camila Hawthorne and Jovan Scott Lewis, "Black Geographies: Material Praxis of Black Life and Study," 1-25.
  - Chapter 1: Danielle Purifoy, "Call us Alive Someplace: Du Boisian Methods and Living Black Geographies," 27-49.
  - Chapter 2: Judith Madera, "Shaking the Basemap" 50-71.
  - Chapter 5: Diana Negrín, "Words Re(en)visioned: Black and Indigenous Languages for Autonomy," 124-144.
  - Chapter 6: Jordanna Matlon, "Blackness in the (Post)Colonial African City"
  - Chapter 7: Solange Muñoz, "Marielle Franco and Black Spatial Imaginaries," 167-188.

### Week 3 (2/5) – Black Atlantics

- Christen Anne Smith, "Towards a Black Feminist Model of Black Atlantic Liberation: Remembering Beatriz Nascimento," *Meridians* 14, no. 2 (2016): 71-87.
- Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Harvard, 1993)
- Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, "Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic: Queer Imaginings of the Middle Passage," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 14, no. 2-3 (2008): 191-215.
- Aretha Phiri & Michelle M. Wright, "Interview: 'The elephant in the room': talking (physics of) blackness with Michelle M. Wright," *Cultural Studies* 37, no. 2 (2023): 333-340.

## Unit 2: Trade, Slavery, and the Making of the Black Atlantic

### Week 4 (2/12) – Africa's Longitudinal Contacts

- David Northrup, *Africa's Discovery of Europe* (Oxford, 2002)—Chapters 1-5; chapter 6 optional

### Week 5 (2/19) – The Middle Passage & the Archive

- Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Harvard, 2007)
- Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1-14.
- Special Issue on Slavery and the Archive in *History of the Present* 6, no. 2 (Fall 2016)
  - Brian Connolly and Marisa Fuentes, "Introduction: From Archives of Slavery to Liberated Futures?," 105-116.
  - Stephanie Smallwood, "The Politics of the Archive and History's Accountability to the Enslaved," 117-132.
  - Jennifer Morgan, "Accounting for 'The Most Excruciating Torment': Gender, Slavery, and Trans-Atlantic Passages," 184-207.
  - Saidiya Hartman, "The Dead Book Revisited," 208-215.

### **Week 6 (2/26) – Africans to Spanish Americas**

- Elena FitzPatrick Sifford, "Mexican Manuscripts and the First Images of Africans in the Americas," *Ethnohistory* 66, no. 2 (April 2019): 223-248.
- Sherwin K. Bryant, Ben Vinson III, and Rachel Sarah O'Toole, eds., *Africans to Spanish America Expanding the Diaspora* (University of Illinois, 2012)
  - Sherwin K. Bryant, Ben Vinson III, and Rachel Sarah O'Toole, "Introduction," 1-23.
  - Leo J. Garofalo, "The Shape of a Diaspora: The Movement of Afro-Iberians to Colonial Spanish America," 27-49.
  - Frank "Trey" Proctor III, "African Diasporic Ethnicity in Mexico City to 1650," 50-72.
  - Rachel Sarah O'Toole "To Be Free and Lucumí: Ana de la Calle and Making African Diaspora Identities in Colonial Peru," 72-93.
  - Charles Beatty-Medina, "Between the Cross and the Sword: Religious Conquest and Maroon Legitimacy in Colonial Esmeraldas," 95-113.
  - Karen Y. Morrison, "Whitening Revisited: Nineteenth-Century Cuban Counterpoints," 163-185.
  - Herbert S. Klein, "The African American Experience in Comparative Perspective: The Current Question of the Debate," 206-222.

### **Week 7 (3/4) – No Class (Spring Break)**

- Watch a movie!
  - *Atlantique* (Mati Diop, 2019)
  - *La noire de...* (Ousmane Sembène, 1966)—[https://wrlc-gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=cdi\\_infobase\\_filmsondemand\\_56905&context=PC&vid=01WRLC\\_GML:01WRLC\\_GML&lang=en&search\\_scope=MyInst\\_and\\_CI&adaptor=Primo%20Central&tab=Everything&query=any,contains,ousmane%20sembene%20Black%20girl&facet=rtype,include,videos&offset=0](https://wrlc-gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=cdi_infobase_filmsondemand_56905&context=PC&vid=01WRLC_GML:01WRLC_GML&lang=en&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&adaptor=Primo%20Central&tab=Everything&query=any,contains,ousmane%20sembene%20Black%20girl&facet=rtype,include,videos&offset=0)

## **UNIT 3: Revolt & Revolution in the Black Atlantic**

### **Week 8 (3/11) – Atlantic Cultures of Revolt**

- Vincent Brown, *Tacky's Revolt: The Story of an Atlantic Slave War* (Harvard, 2020)
- Julia Gaffield, "Haitian Writer Baron de Vastey and Black Atlantic Humanism: An Interview with Marlene L. Daut," *Black Perspectives*, June 4, 2018.

### **Week 9 (3/18) – Atlantic Revolutions / Trans-Colonial Black Politics**

- Julius Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the age of the Haitian Revolution* (Verso, 2018)
- Sara Johnson, *The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas* (University of California, 2012)

### **Week 10 (3/25) – Slavery, Women, and Medical History in the Black Atlantic**

- Deirdre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology* (University of Georgia Press, 2017)—Intro + Chapters 1-3
- Sasha Turner, *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica* (UPenn, 2017)—Intro
- Rana Hogarth, *Medicalizing Blackness: Making Racial Difference in the Atlantic World, 1780-1840*, (UNC, 2017)—Intro, Chapters 4 & 6



## UNIT 4: Modernity & the Black Atlantic

### Week 11 (4/1) – Diaspora, Black Internationalism, and Citizenship

- Brent Hayes Edward, *The Practice Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Harvard, 2003)
- Emily Marker, *Black France, White Europe: Youth, Race, and Belonging in the Postwar Era* (Cornell, 2022)—Intro + Chapters 4 & 5
- Jerome C. Branche, *Post/Colonialism and the Pursuit of Freedom in the Black Atlantic* (Routledge, 2018)
  - Cary Fraser, Chapter 12: "Citizenship and freedom in the Black Atlantic after 1945—context and challenge," 239-258
- Postcolonialism—selected text and/or film

### Week 12 (4/8) – Postcolonial/Decolonial Cultures of Connection in the Black Atlantic

- Ann Reed, *Pilgrimage Tourism of Diaspora Africans to Ghana* (Routledge, 2015), Chapter 1: "Slavery Heritage and the Call to Home: Diasporan Travel to Ghana," 1-29.
- Yolanda Covington-Ward and Jeanette S. Jouili, eds., *Embodying Black Religions in Africa and Its Diasporas* (Duke, 2021)
  - N. Fadeke Castor, Chapter 3: "Spiritual Ethnicity: Our Collective Ancestors in Ifá and Orisha Devotion across the Americas," 70-96
  - Camee Maddox-Wingfield, Chapter 7: "The Quest for Spiritual Purpose in a Secular Dance Community: Bèlè's Rebirth in Contemporary Martinique," 175-196
  - Jeanette S. Jouili, Chapter 8: "Embodying Black Islam: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Afro-Diasporic Muslim Hip-Hop in Britain," 197-221
- Kelly Baker Josephs and Roopika Risam, eds., *The Digital Black Atlantic* (University of Minnesota, 2021)
  - Kelly Baker Josephs and Roopika Risam, "Introduction: the Digital Black Atlantic," ix-xxiv.
  - Sayan Bhattacharyya, "Text Analysis for Thought in the Black Atlantic," 77-83.
  - Jamila Moore Pewu's "Digital Reconnaissance: Re(Locating) Dark Spots on a Map," 108-121.
  - Schuyler Esprit, "Heterotopias of Resistance: Reframing Caribbean Narratives in Digital Spaces," 123-137.
  - Agata Bloch, Demival Vasques Filho, and Michał Bojanowski, "Slaves, Freedmen, Mulattos, Pardos, and Indigenous Peoples: The Early Modern Social Networks of the Population of Color in the Atlantic Portuguese Empire," 150-161.
  - Kaiama L. Glover and Alex Gil, "On the Interpretation of Digital Caribbean Dreams," 225-236.

### Week 13 (4/15) – Black Lives Matter

- Michael J. Gennaro and Brian M. McGowan, eds., *Sport and Protest in the Black Atlantic* (Routledge, 2023)
  - Michael J. Gennaro and Brian M. McGowan, "Introduction," 1-16
- Kevin K. Gaines, "Global Black Lives Matter," *American Quarterly*, Volume 74, Number 3, September 2022, pp. 626-634
- Saif Shahin, Junki Nakahara, and Mariana Sánchez, "Black Lives Matter goes global: Connective action meets cultural hybridity in Brazil, India, and Japan," *new media & society*, Vol. 26, no. 1 (2024) 216–235.
- BLM media selections
- **Wednesday 4/17 – Paper proposals with bibliography due at 12 noon**



**Week 14 (4/22) – Paper presentations**

**Week 15 (4/29) – Paper presentations and Conclusions**

**5/6 – Final paper due at 12 noon**