

**AFRC 6400: PROSEMINAR IN AFRICANA STUDIES**  
**FALL 2024: WEDNESDAYS 1-4PM**

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**Course Description**

This graduate seminar brings together various methodological and theoretical approaches to interpreting Black diaspora life, culture, thought, and politics. Placing special emphasis on foundational as well as emergent scholarship that shapes and reshapes the discipline of Black Studies, we will examine a selection of humanistic and social scientific studies of various local, national, and international contexts. The texts also emphasize the contributions of Black feminist scholarship for understanding the complexity of the Black world and for framing our future research. We will give much attention to the first books some of these scholars wrote and outline the strategies they utilize to formulate innovative research questions, design their methodologies, and generate creative ideas that contribute to the advancement of Black Studies scholarship. A key question guiding the seminar is, “How do scholars of Black Studies come to devise their research questions and why are these questions important for humanistic and social scientific inquiry?” This course does not offer a comprehensive overview of the theoretical depth of the field and the geographic vastness of the African diaspora. However, the texts discussed in this seminar will provide students with theoretical frameworks for formulating their graduate research projects.

Key themes include: Black radicalism, intersectionality, freedom, humanity, memory, and diaspora.

The seminar objectives include:

- To critically explore various theoretical and methodological approaches that inform Black Studies scholarship in the past, present, and future;
- To examine some foundational ideas for formulating research for studying Black diaspora life;
- To prepare students to develop their own original ideas for graduate research-based drawing from the intellectual traditions in the field;
- To understand the importance of Black feminist thought and praxis for research innovation in Black Diaspora Studies.

**Class Time Allotment and Feedback**

The total of in-class hours and out-of-class work for this course is approximately 180 hours over the length of the semester. Students seeking to maximize their learning can expect to spend 36 hours in class (3 hours per week for 12 weeks) and 120 hours of reading, writing, and preparing for class discussions (approx. 10 hours per week for 12 weeks). Actual times will vary for each student; final grades are not determined by the amount of time a student spends on the course.

### **Statement on Inclusion**

The University of Pennsylvania is committed to full inclusion of all students from around the world. As a professor I value unique cultural perspectives, including students whose primary academic training has not been in English.

Please inform me early in the term if you have a disability or other conditions that might require accommodations or modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me after class or during office hours.

For more information, please contact the Weingarten Center at 215-573-9235 that offers a variety of confidential support to all Penn students in reaching their academic goals. The Center offers learning consultations to assist students with learning strategies related to time and project management, academic reading and writing, note-taking, and exam preparation, among other needs. The Center also provides free tutoring individually or in small groups that involve support for understanding course concepts and critical reading and writing.

### **Statement on Academic Integrity**

All student work in this class must be the result of the student's original thoughts and study. I expect all ideas to be produced without assistance and stated in the student's own words, except as quotations marks and references that acknowledge the use of other sources. If you have any questions about what constitutes a violation of academic integrity, please become familiar with [Penn's Code of Academic Integrity](#).

### **Required Texts**

1. Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (2008)
2. Michael Hanchard, *Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil, 1945-1988* (1994)
3. C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (1938)
4. Katherine McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis* (2015)
5. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *The Language of Languages* (2023)
6. Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (1997)
7. Barbara D. Savage, *Merze Tate: The Global Odyssey of a Black Woman Scholar* (2023)
8. Nicosia M. Shakes, *Women's Activist Theatre in Jamaica and South Africa: Gender, Race, and Performance, Space* (2023)
9. Christen A. Smith, Bethânia N. F. Gomes, and Archie Davies, *The Dialectic Is in the Sea: The Black Radical Thought of Beatriz Nascimento* (2023)
10. Dagmawi Woubshet, *The Calendar of Loss: Race, Sexuality and Mourning in the Early Era of AIDS* (2015)

### **Recommended Texts:**

1. Jafari S. Allen, *There's a Disco Ball Between Us: A Theory of Black Gay Life* (2022)
2. M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory and the Sacred* (2006)
3. Ife Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (2015)
5. Asale Angel-Ajani, *Strange Trade: The Story of Two Women Who Risked Everything in the International Drug Trade* (2010)

6. Dionne Brand, *A Map to the Door of Not Return: Notes to Belonging* (2002); *Nomenclature: New and Collected Poems* (2022)
7. Tina M. Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe* (2012)
8. Odette Casamayor-Cisneros, *Utopía, distopía e ingravidez: reconfiguraciones cosmológicas en la narrativa postsoviética cubana* (2013)
9. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (2008)
10. Edwidge Danticat, *The Farming of Bones* (1998)
11. Kesha Fikes, *Managing African Portugal: The Citizen-Migrant Distinction* (2009)
12. Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (2018)
13. Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African-American Women Activists in the Cold War* (2011)
14. Camilla Hawthorne and Jovan Scott Lewis, *The Black Geographic: Praxis, Resistance, Futurity* (2023)
15. Cheryl Hicks, *Talk With You Like a Woman: African-American, Justice, and Reform in New York (1890-1935)* (2010)
16. bell hooks, *Yearning: race, gender, and cultural politics* (1990)
17. Delia Jarret-Macauley, *The Life of Una Marson, 1905-1965* (2010)
18. Régine Michelle Jean-Charles, *Conflict Bodies: The Politics of Rape Representation in the Francophone Imaginary* (2016); *Looking for Other Worlds: Black Feminism and Haitian Fiction* (2022)
19. Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (2006); *Dear Science and Other Stories* (2021)
20. Koritha Mitchell, *Living With Lynching: African-American Lynching Plays, Performance, and Citizenship, 1890-1930* (2011)
21. Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986)
22. Zita Nunes, *Cannibal Democracy: Race and Representation in the Literature in the Americas* (2008)
23. Leigh Renee Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (2011)
24. Dorothy Roberts, *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics and Big Business Re-create Race in the Twenty-First Century* (2012); *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (1997)
25. Savannah Shange, *Progressive Dystopia: Abolition, Antiracism & Schooling in San Francisco* (2019)
26. Barbara Smith, *The Truth That Never Hurts: Writings on Race, Gender, and Freedom* (2000)
27. Robyn Spencer, *The Revolution Has Come: Black Power, Gender and the Black Panther Party in Oakland* (2016)
28. Rachel Spronk, *Thomas Hendriks, Readings on Sexualities from Africa* (202)
29. Filomena Steady, *Women and Leadership in Africa: Mothering the Nation and Humanizing the State* (2011)
30. Keeanga-Yahmatta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (2019)
31. Deborah Thomas, *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica* (2004); *Exceptional Violence: Embodied Citizenship in Transnational Jamaica* (2011); *Political Life in the Wake of the Plantation: Sovereignty, Witnessing, Repair* (2019)
32. Gina Ulysses, *Downtown Ladies: Informal Commercial Importers, a Haitian Anthropologist and Self-Making in Jamaica* (2008)
33. Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (2011)
34. Gloria Wekker, *The Politics of Passion: Women's Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora* (2006)
35. Vincent Woodard, *The Delectable Negro: Human Consumption and Homoeroticism in US Slave Culture* (2014)

## Grading Criteria

**Your final grade will result from the following components:**

**Class attendance and participation (30%):** You are required to attend all classes, and your participation in class discussions is required and should focus on a critical and respectful engagement with the course readings, films and peer comments. We will use class time to read additional texts or to watch films as well as to engage in targeted writing focused on the assigned readings.

**Book review submission for publication (20%; 1000-1200 words):** Choose a book recently published (no more than two years old) that is related to your own research. Consult a journal in your field and contact the book review editor to submit the essay for publication. To get full credit for this assignment, you must submit proof of submission by the end of the semester.

**Final exam essay (30%; 12-15 pages):** You will receive three essay questions to choose one to write a 12-15 page essay over the course of one week. You will develop an original argument and support your analysis with textual evidence only from the course readings.

**Final exam in-class discussion (10%):** You will give a 5-minute presentation to walk us through the development and organization of your paper's analysis. The class will ask you questions aimed at enhancing your ideas, developing the important skill of defending your ideas, and learning how to incorporate critical feedback into your revisions.

**Revised exam essay (10%):** Incorporating the critical peer comments on the final exam essay, you will submit a revised version of the exam essay.

You will submit all assignments on Canvas.

## Schedule of Topics and Reading

<b>Week 1</b> (8/28)	<b>Course Introduction</b>
<b>Week 2</b> (9/4)	<b>C.L.R. James</b> , <i>The Black Jacobins</i> (1938)
<b>Week 3</b> (9/11)	<b>Ngugi Wa Thiong'o</b> , <i>The Language of Languages</i> (2023)
<b>Week 4</b> (9/18)	<b>Carole Boyce Davies</b> , <i>Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones</i> (2008)
<b>Week 5</b> (9/25)	<b>Barbara D. Savage</b> , <i>Merze Tate: The Global Odyssey of a Black Woman Scholar</i> (2023)
<b>Week 6</b> (10/2)	<b>Michael Hanchard</b> , <i>Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil, 1945-1988</i> (1994)
<b>Week 7</b> (10/9)	<b>Christen A. Smith, Bethânia N. F. Gomes, and Archie Davies</b> , <i>The Dialectic Is in the Sea: The Black Radical Thought of Beatriz Nascimento</i> (2023)

<b>Week 8</b> (10/16)	<b>Katherine McKittrick</b> , <i>Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis</i> (2015)
<b>Week 9</b> (10/23)	<b>Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí</b> , <i>The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses</i> (1997)
<b>Week 10</b> (10/30)	<b>Dagmawi Woubshet</b> , <i>The Calendar of Loss: Race, Sexuality and Mourning in the Early Era of AIDS</i> (2015)
<b>Week 11</b> (11/6)	<b>Nicosia M. Shakes</b> , <i>Women's Activist Theatre in Jamaica and South Africa: Gender, Race, and Performance, Space</i> (2023)
<b>Week 12</b> (11/13)	Final Exam Essay Start
<b>Week 13</b> (11/20)	Final Exam Essay End
<b>Week 14</b> (11/27)	No class - Thanksgiving Break
<b>Week 15</b> (12/4)	Final Exam In-Class Discussion
<b>Week 16</b> (12/11)	Reading Days
<b>Week 17</b> (12/18)	Final Revised Exam Essay Due

***Syllabus subject to change.***